The Dissertation Committee for Raymond John Kim

certifies that this is the approved version of the following dissertation:

Citizens Caesar:

The Emperors and Control in Suetonius' *Caesares*

Committee:

_____

M. Gwyn Morgan, Supervisor

_____

Lesley A. Dean-Jones

_____

Jennifer V. Ebbeler

_____

Robert A. Kaster

_____

Andrew M. Riggsby

Citizens Caesar:

The Emperors and Control in Suetonius' *Caesares*

by

Raymond John Kim, B.A.; M.A.

Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Texas at Austin

December 2008

familiae

Acknowledgements

This dissertation could not have been written without the support and help of many people. The members of my dissertation committee commented on multiple drafts of the following chapters, offered their helpful advice, and—I think that they will understand when I emphasize this—they always did so with patience, for which I am sincerely grateful. I owe more thanks to my supervisor Gwyn Morgan than I can begin to express here. He will know what I mean when I say that the best parts of this dissertation were 'written' on the central porch of Waggener Hall. I am not sure that there is a better way for me put it than that.

I must also thank the staff and the librarians at The University of Texas at Austin, especially Gina Giovannone, Joe Sosa, and Shiela Winchester. This dissertation would literally have been impossible without their assistance and, again, patience. I am of course greatly indebted to the University's Classics department. It has carried me though some times when I suspect that the circumstances may not have clearly warranted doing so. I would also like to thank Theresa Vasquez for all her help and support over the course of my student career in Austin, especially during an unfortunate series of events that required me to be away from the University. Matthew Ervin, I would like to note, has somehow managed to put up with my fumbling around in his office for a long time.

K. Paul Bednarowski read drafts of everything that follows in this dissertation. I can think of no other reason that he would have done this than that he is my friend, and for that, too, I am very grateful.

Most of all, I would like to thank my family.

Citizens Caesar:

The Emperors and Control in Suetonius' *Caesares*

Raymond John Kim, Ph.D.

The University of Texas at Austin, 2008

Supervisor: M. Gwyn Morgan

This dissertation consists of four chapters in which I consider the question of what the emperors can control, in Suetonius' *Caesares*. The first chapter sets up the question of the emperors' control with an examination of the genealogies with which Suetonius typically begins each *Life*. Previous interpretations of these sections have tended either to advance or to deny Suetonius' belief in determinism. I suggest that Suetonius' approach is more nuanced—the biographer's Tiberius, for example, may be as arrogant as his Claudian and Livian ancestors, but Domitian is clearly neither his father Vespasian nor his brother Titus—and that Suetonius presents the genealogies in order to separate the emperor from his *gens*. Suetonius' purpose in these sections is to demonstrate that the emperor is responsible for his actions regardless of what his family history or ancestry might lead one to expect.

In the second chapter, I continue with the question of responsibility, but this time from the perspective of the 'portraits' or physical descriptions that Suetonius provides for each emperor. In place of the long-standing interpretation of physiognomy—the belief that certain physical features are signs of specific character traits (*e.g.*, a pale complexion is a sign of effeminacy and cowardice)—I argue that Suetonius' purpose is to examine the emperor's behavior in relation to his body. The question, for example, is not what Caligula's thinning hair as such tells us about the emperor, but rather what Caligula's management of his hair tells us about him (Caligula

makes looking at his hair a capital offense). Caligula cannot, in other words be held responsible for his thinning hair, but how he manages it is up to him.

The third chapter considers the emperor's control or agency from the perspective of Suetonius' much-neglected *divisiones*, or leading statements that introduce and guide the rubrics which tend to be thought of as Suetonius' trademark and which have consequently received much more scholarly attention. I argue that the judgments or opinions these leading statements frequently contain are crucial to understanding the rubrics that follow them and that they are the primary means through which Suetonius demonstrates the emperors' responsibility for their actions.

The final chapter is a demonstration of the ideas laid out in chapter 3. I use the *divisiones* that introduce the emperors' deaths to ask how his subjects' response to his behavior either does or does not condition future events. In the *Galba*, for instance, Suetonius notes on more than one occasion the elderly emperor's refusal to pay his soldiers a donative. This obstinacy, Suetonius points out, made it easier for Galba's successor Otho to achieve his disloyal goal with the help of those same disaffected soldiers. Again, the point is that the payment of the donative was entirely under Galba's control and that, as Suetonius presents things, the people who kill Galba are the very ones whom he annoys.

Table of Contents

Introduction

Ever dumb thing I ever done in my life there was a decision I made
before that got me into it. It was never the dumb thing.
It was always some choice I'd made before it.
-Cormac McCarthy *All the Pretty Horses*-

Suetonius' biographies of Julius Caesar and Rome's first eleven emperors, the *Caesares*, are deceptively simple in their presentation. The basic framework that Suetonius generally adopts in each biography follows the natural pattern of a human life and seems logical or obvious enough. Suetonius starts with his subject's ancestry, proceeds to the subject himself, and then finishes with the subject's death. The central portion of a Suetonian *Life*, however, in which the biographer focuses specifically on his subject, is likely to surprise the modern reader. For instead of the chronological account that one might expect, Suetonius writes by category or rubric. That is, instead of presenting a sequence of events that take the reader from the birth to the death of his subject, Suetonius breaks the individual into keywords or concepts. The *Claudius*, for example, does not advance chronologically from the emperor's accidental accession to his marriage with Agrippina. In the place of a continuous narrative, the reader encounters examples of Claudius' cruelty, timidity, stupidity, and so on grouped beneath their respective headings with Claudius' marriages and freedmen seemingly sprinkled in at Suetonius' convenience.

Yet whatever the modern reader's discomfort at Suetonius' approach, Leo recognized the more important question of the ancients' reception of the *Caesares*. As strange as Suetonius' *Caesares* may appear to the modern reader, in other words, they might have appeared equally strange to Suetonius' contemporaries. For the *Caesares*' presentation by rubric stands out even in what survives from the ancient biographical tradition prior to Suetonius, and Leo's attempt to resolve this problem, *Die griechisch-römische Biographie nach ihrer literarischen Form*, has had a profound impact on the study of Suetonius' biographies.[1] Though Leo himself described his work as 'this little book',

[1] Leo (1901).

its influence and its scope are so far-reaching that any examination of Suetonius' *Caesares* must at least acknowledge its arguments. And as one of the most significant results of Leo's work is that it steered much of subsequent scholarship in the direction of genre or origin, we need to understand how it did so and what the consequences have been.

Leo proposed an Alexandrian school of scholarly biography. According to his conception of this tradition, Alexandrian biography was objective and dispassionate. It was arranged by the categories or rubrics that Suetonius would later adopt, rather than by the chronology one might generally expect in recounting a man's life. Alexandrian biography did not, moreover, treat political or military figures, but restricted itself to literary personalities as with Suetonius' *Life* of Virgil. Stylistically, the biographies were dry or 'scientific' as befits a work of scholarship. All this is in contrast to the Peripatetic model of biography which the Alexandrians supposedly adapted to their own ends. Peripatetic biography was 'historical' or chronological, and recorded the lives of 'men of deeds'. It was popular and entertaining, and written in a 'light' style. The result is a historical βίος περὶ ἀνδρός (Peripatetic) in contrast to a scholarly περὶ ἀνδός (Alexandrian).[2]

Leo's work is essentially a genetic reconstruction. It attempts to explain Suetonius by creating a sense of what the biographies that preceded his must have looked like. The objection that some scholars have raised against Leo's reconstruction, however, is that it lacks evidence.[3] The only substantial, extant example of Leo's scholarly biography happens to be Suetonius.[4] For the Greek authors of this tradition prior to Suetonius, Leo adduces only fragments and epitomes,[5] and the supposed

[2] See Leo (1901) 67ff., 129-131, and 140-141.
[3] See, *e.g.*, Steidle (1951) 3-12.
[4] Leo (1901) 135: "das einzige klassische Beispiel gibt für uns Sueton."
[5] A brief example will demonstrate Leo's methods. In an attempt to understand Peripatetic biography as represented by Satyros, a fragment of one of his alleged sources, Hieronymus, is compared to Diogenes Laertius. The fragment of Hieronymus, however, comes from yet another fragment, this time of Porphyry. Leo does not address the problem of basing his argument on a text now twice removed from its original context. Nor does he bother with the fact that Porphyry may be an epitome or, if he is not, that his accuracy cannot be determined, (1901) 120-123.

primary Roman exemplar for Suetonius, Varro's *Imagines*, survives only in title.[6] But though some scholars objected to Leo's work, many of them were nonetheless guided by it in their counter-arguments and continued the search for literary antecedents to Suetonius that Leo had begun.

In place of a foreign, Alexandrian tradition, Stuart and Townend both argued for the 'commemoration instincts' found in the native Roman traditions of the funerary inscription and its accompanying *laudatio funebris* as appropriate precursors for Suetonius' biographies.[7] Lewis later expanded on this work and argued for more general categories of *laudatio* and *vituperatio*, and that these categories, as well as Suetonius' use of rubrics, have parallels in the oratory of Cicero.[8] Steidle and Wallace-Hadrill offer perhaps the most prominent of the post-Leo studies. Steidle suggested that the *Caesares* were Roman in spirit and topic—especially in Suetonius' interest in ancestry, political careers, and virtues and vices—but had formal similarities to Greek models, in particular the βασιλικὸς λόγος.[9] Wallace-Hadrill returned to the spirit of Leo's arguments without retaining their determinative formalism.[10] By Wallace-Hadrill's interpretation, Suetonius still writes scholarly biography, but as a function of his professional status as a scholar and his interests as an antiquarian rather than of any particular tradition that he inherits.[11]

Like Leo's arguments, however, Stuart and Townend tend to rely on reconstructions for which there are not much evidence. Tacitus' *Agricola*, for example, though clearly not Suetonian, is thought to derive its inspiration from the same Roman spirit that motivates Suetonius. Nepos and the shadowy figures of Varro, Santra, and Hyginus are also alleged to work in this vein, but as a nebulous bridge from Leo's Alexandrian tradition to a more Roman product from which Suetonius adopted the

---

[6] Leo (1901) 141: "Bei Sueton ist varronisches Material, varronisch-alexandrinische Methode und alexandrinische Form."
[7] See Stuart (1928) 194ff. and Townend (1967) 79-111.
[8] Lewis (1991) 3643ff.
[9] Steidle (1951), esp. 109-126.
[10] Wallace-Hadrill (2004 [1983]) 70ff.: "The great value of Leo's book was to show that Suetonius' biographies do indeed belong to a long scholarly tradition."
[11] See, *e.g*, Wallace-Hadrill (2004 [1983]) 10-15 on the "methodology of the ancient scholar." and 19-22: "[Suetonius'] is the businesslike style of the ancient scholar."

form of the *Caesares*. Steidle and Lewis generally avoid such problems by basing their arguments on Suetonius' mechanics and how he constructs his *Lives*, and the lack of such close attention to Suetonius' text has in fact been the primary objection to Wallace-Hadrill's approach. For him, the *Caesares* should be interpreted in the context of Suetonius' profession, interests, and even equestrian status. From a mechanical or stylistic perspective, Wallace-Hadrill judges that the *Caesares* reflect "the businesslike style of the ancient scholar," and that Suetonius' text as such merits minimal consideration.[12]

All the above approaches thus interpret the *Caesares* from the general perspective adopted by Leo to a greater or lesser degree. Though Steidle and Lewis engage with Suetonius' text, even their interpretations are to some extent guided by a wish to make the biographer's text conform to the models they are proposing. And Stuart, Townend, and Wallace-Hadrill, for their part, privilege their versions of Suetonius' literary 'parents' over his text in their studies.[13] Lounsbury's work has perhaps been the most significant counter to such methods. Lounsbury emphatically rejects the notion that Suetonius is best interpreted through the lens of genre or antecedent, and argues that, insofar as such arguments rely on reconstructions, the most useful approach is to ask 'what Suetonius is doing'.[14] As the title of his book, published shortly after Wallace-Hadrill's, suggests—*The Arts of Suetonius*—Lounsbury's purpose is demonstrate Suetonius' merits as an artistic, literary author.[15]

Lounsbury's Suetonius stands in direct contrast to the dry or 'scientific' scholar presented, in particular, by Leo and Wallace-Hadrill. In addition to the skillful arrangement with which he credits the biographer, Lounsbury argues that the simplicity of Suetonius' style that has often bored modern readers would have been received by an ancient audience favorably and bestowed on the *Caesares*' a 'vividness' or

[12] Wallace-Hadrill (2004 [1983]) 15-22.
[13] As Lounsbury (1987) 136n.19 observes, "four pages out of two hundred are deemed plenty to cover 'Style'" by Wallace-Hadrill (2004 [1983]) 19-22.
[14] See, *e.g.*, Lounsbury (1991) 3751n.8: "Sage [1979a&b] is concerned throughout to prove that Suetonius is not Tacitus, without being concerned to show what Suetonius is; he nowhere tries to discover what Suetonius means or purposes to do. To say, and to say with annoyance or anger, that Euripides is not Sophocles, Lucretius not Vergil, tells us little about Euripides or Lucretius."
[15] Lounsbury (1987); see also, Lounsbury (1979) and (1991).

enargeia.[16] Lounsbury's work provides a significant alternative to the stereotype of Suetonius the scholar and, equally important, makes a convincing case for the need to take Suetonius' text seriously. Because part of his project is to 'rehabilitate' Suetonius, however, he tends to focus on select passages of the *Caesares* that are more likely to reward scrutiny.[17] While such examinations can be useful, they are necessarily limited. Lounsbury's reader, in other words, may have a better appreciation for Suetonius' artistry in certain *Lives* or parts of them, but an impression of the *Caesares* overall will still be wanting.

Despite my criticisms, all these scholars provide arguments that are useful for understanding Suetonius' *Caesares*. My discussion of their work was intended only to demonstrate their perspectives and limitations. Even if Leo's reconstruction were correct, for example, the fact that Suetonius' biographies are the only extant example of the tradition he supposedly inherited would limit that tradition's utility for the interpretation of his texts. It is worth pointing out in this context that when a fragment of the Peripatetic biographer Satyrus' *Euripides* was discovered, it was written in neither the 'scientific' rubrics of the Alexandrian tradition, nor in the 'light' and chronological form of the Peripatetic tradition, but as a dialogue. Indeed, even Suetonius' other biographical works do not serve as useful references for his *Caesares* on various points. As Wallace-Hadrill has observed, literary *Lives* like the *Horace* provide "no possible framework for handling the public administrative life of an emperor [and it] is also important to realize how little the literary lives explain about an area where they might have provided a model, that is the description of character."[18]

It seems best therefore to leave aside the question of generic antecedents and follow the course suggested by Lounsbury and ask 'what Suetonius is doing'. This dissertation, however, will take a more holistic view of the *Caesares* than Lounsbury.

[16] Lounsbury (1987) 91-120.
[17] See, *e.g.*, Lounsbury (1987) 63-89.
[18] Wallace-Hadrill (2004 [1983]) 70-71.

Instead of isolating certain passages for thorough examination, I have identified four topics that will allow us to cover all the Imperial *Lives* in a way that gives due consideration to Suetonius' strategies of arrangement and presentation as well as to develop a sense of the *Caesares* as a whole. Though I will make no claims regarding Suetonius' status as an artist, nor attempt to elevate him to the level enjoyed by some of his literary peers, my general purpose is to establish that, even if one does not focus on the more 'successful' passages of the *Caesares*, Suetonius clearly imagines himself to be more than the dry scholar that some have supposed, and that whatever the origins of his method of composition, he is doing more than simply categorizing data. More specifically, I will argue throughout this dissertation that Suetonius' primary concern is what the emperor does as a function of his ability to control or influence a given situation.

Chapter 1 sets up the question of what the emperors can control with an examination of the genealogies with which Suetonius typically begins a *Life*. I argue that Suetonius presents the genealogies in order to separate the emperor from his family. The biographer focuses, I will argue, on what the emperor actually does regardless of the expectations his ancestry creates for him. This chapter engages primarily with two previous interpretations of ancestry in the *Caesares* that center around the question of whether or not Suetonius endorses a determinative relationship between the emperor and his family.[19] The determinist interpretation, in brief, states that the emperors are the sum of their ancestry, while the non-determinist interpretation simply denies the family such influence. By examining each of the *Lives* and how Suetonius presents the various genealogies, we shall find that neither interpretation is entirely correct or incorrect, and that Suetonius is capable of endorsing either position. Suetonius' judgment of the emperor's relationship to his family, moreover, will reflect the biographer's opinion that the emperor himself is responsible for the degree to which he does or does not reproduce the traits and

[19] Gascou (1984) 582-587 (determinative); Wardle (1994) 96 (non-determinative).

behavior of his ancestors. For there would be little point in judging the emperor for something that he cannot control.

Chapter 2 continues with the question of control, but this time from the viewpoint of one of the categories that Suetonius routinely provides for each emperor. The 'portraits' or physical descriptions of the emperors have long interested scholars, but without satisfactory resolution to the question of their purpose. The traditional interpretation is that advanced by Evans and Couissin.[20] According to both scholars, Suetonius' descriptions of the emperors' appearance reflect the influence of the ancient science of physiognomy on the biographer. Physiognomy holds that an individual's physical features reveal his or her character traits. A very pale or fair complexion, for example, would indicate that its owner was an effeminate coward. After a discussion of the physiognomic interpretation of Suetonius and some of its flaws, I propose that the 'portraits' of the emperors are yet another example of the emperor's agency. Very briefly, one example of the argument I intend to make is Caligula's thinning hair (*Cal.* 50.1). The question, I will argue, is not what Caligula's hair as such tells us about the emperor, but rather what Caligula's management of his hair—something that he can in fact control—tell us about him (Caligula makes looking at his hair a capital offense).

In **Chapter 3**, I take a more mechanical approach to the *Caesares* and offer what I think is a new perspective on Suetonius' use of the categories or rubrics for which he is so well known. In brief, I suggest that previous emphasis on Suetonius' rubrics has drawn attention away from the leading statements that he inserts before, and that govern, the rubrics. After a discussion of their basic mechanics and a brief comparison with the methods of Valerius Maximus, I will argue that these leading statements, or *divisiones*, frequently contain opinions (either of Suetonius or of the emperor's contemporaries) that are essential to understanding why Suetonius is presenting a given rubric or how that rubric (or series of them) is to be understood by his reader. These statements are a comment on the emperor's behavior and as such ask the same question of what the emperor controls as encountered in the previous chapters. The

[20] Couissin (1935) 234-256; Evans wrote several works on this topic, but her most complete arguments can be found in *Physiognomics in the Ancient World* (1969).

mechanical perspective I adopt in this chapter will allow us to see that the issue of control is one that pervades the entirety of the individual *Lives* rather than a handful of select rubrics.

Chapter 4 is intended as a demonstration of the arguments laid out in the previous chapter about the *divisiones.* My emphasis in this chapter, however, will be on a single topic, the emperor's deaths, that will provide a more thorough account of the relationship between the *divisiones* and the material they govern. The judgments or opinions that these statements express will be especially relevant in this chapter. For on the question of what the emperor controls, I will argue that Suetonius presents the deaths of the emperors, in particular those of the bad emperors, as the result of situations that are not fixed or irremediable. The biographer first makes clear in a *divisio* that the emperor's behavior has resulted in a certain opinion or judgment. It is then up to the emperor to modify his behavior and to correct any offense he may have caused. This chapter will thus serve as a final argument for the importance of what the emperor can control, this time as part of a clear cause-and-effect relationship between his behavior and its results. The *divisio*'s prominence in constructing this relationship will also establish more firmly the device's importance for Suetonius' evaluation of the emperors.

Throughout this dissertation, my intention is not to demonstrate Suetonius' artistry or skill at arrangement as such, but to establish that when his text is taken seriously, interpretations of the *Caesares* that do not go beyond their assumptions of the biographer as a scholar and an inheritor of a tradition or set of values fall short of explaining 'what Suetonius is doing' because they do not think to ask it. The questions of genre or antecedent are essentially 'why' questions that assume an understanding of the 'what' question I am probing. This dissertation will, I hope, make a convincing case for the idea that before we ask 'why' Suetonius does things that he does, we need first to admit that previous approaches to the *Caesares* have failed adequately to address the question of precisely what those 'things' are.

Chapter 1: Genealogies

In his account of 'the Augustan Succession,' the Greek historian Dio reports a speech by Augustus addressed to Rome's husbands and fathers. In it, the emperor asks them how it could not 'be pleasing to accept as your own a child exhibiting the features of both its parents; to raise it and to educate it, as a physical and spiritual image of yourself, so that another self comes about in its growth'.[21] Swan has observed that it is unwise to assume that Augustus ever uttered anything quite like these lines at the moment in which Dio locates them.[22] All the same, the sentiments the speech expresses reflect certain ancient notions about the relationship between a child and its parents. The child exhibits certain congenital traits that identify it as the offspring of its parents, and with proper care and education, it will become the living 'image' of its parents, imparting to them a sort of 'immortality' allowing them live on beyond their deaths (Dio 56.3.5).

Suetonius never claims as much in the *Caesares*, though he routinely expends effort in recounting the Imperial genealogies at the beginning of each *Life*. These genealogies provide background information about the man who will be emperor without being specifically about him. As I will argue in this chapter, Suetonius has two intertwined purposes in recounting the emperor's lineage. The biographer establishes, on the one hand, a set of expectations for the emperor on the basis of his ancestry in a way that perhaps anticipates the later words of Dio-Augustus. Unlike the Greek historian, on the other hand, Suetonius does not overlook the extent to which the emperor meets, exceeds, or falls short of those expectations. What, in other words, is the emperor's relationship to his family? The answer to this question, I will argue, is critical to a full appreciation of Suetonius' approach in not just the genealogies, but in the *Caesares* as a whole.

[21] Dio 56.3.4: πῶς δ' οὐκ ἡδὺ ἀνελέσθαι τέκνον ἐξ ἀμφοῖν συμπεφυκὸς καὶ θρέψαι καὶ παιδεῦσαι, εἰκόνα μὲν τοῦ σώματος εἰκόνα δὲ καὶ τῆς ψυχῆς, ὥστε ἐν ἐκείνῳ αὐξηθέντι ἕτερον αὐτὸν γενέσθαι;
[22] Swan (2004) 227.

Previous scholarship has tended to adopt an either/or approach to the relationship between the emperor and his family. That is, what appears in the emperor's genealogy invariably either will or will not reappear in the emperor himself. Gascou favors the determinist interpretation of the genealogies, succinctly asserting the claim that the emperor inherits the virtues and the vices of his ancestors.[23] Wardle, however, contradicts Gascou. According to Wardle's interpretation, Suetonius most likely does not endorse the influence of heredity.[24] This chapter will argue that Suetonius' approach is more nuanced than either interpretation allows. At times, the emperor is a reflection of his family and, to that extent, he meets expectations. This is not always the case, however, and Suetonius is equally capable of presenting the emperor as someone who is not the sum of his hereditary legacy. Suetonius, in other words, is not bound by a strict dogma that requires him to favor one approach to the exclusion of the other.

These interpretations have, moreover, obscured precisely how Suetonius presents the genealogies and what he says in them. The nature of the details he reports from *Life* to *Life* is not always the same. Sometimes Suetonius concentrates on the virtues and vices that Gascou emphasizes, but in other genealogies such qualities are absent. In their place, Suetonius reports details whose point seems to be the social status or prominence of the individual under discussion. By examining how Suetonius presents the genealogies, and what he says in them, it will become apparent that Suetonius sees the family as more than just a potential source of inheritable traits. The biographer, in other words, also acknowledges the family as an external factor that may, or may not, shape the behavior of the future emperor through tradition or education—or, if one prefers, Dio's nurturing and education—rather than genetics alone.

Most significant, however, is Suetonius' management or presentation of the genealogies in the context of the expectations they prompt and the emperors the Caesars end up becoming. In the *Galba*, as I shall argue, Suetonius focuses on the social

[23] Gascou (1984) 582-587.
[24] Wardle (1994) 96.

status of the Sulpicii whom he has deliberately selected for inclusion in the biography. Galba ultimately does not live up to the examples of statesmanship his ancestry sets, but what is important is that Suetonius presents his account of the Sulpicii to make precisely that point. Galba is, to an extent, a Sulpicius in name only. He is, however, always Galba, and the overall goal of this chapter is to establish that Suetonius uses the genealogies as a rhetorical device effectively to set the emperors apart from their families: the genealogies provide a set of expectations for the emperors, but those genealogies, as well as the expectations they give rise to, are the result of Suetonius' own presentation of them. The biographer chooses which family members to include, and he chooses which aspects of their histories to record. So the expectations for the emperor on the basis of his family are, to some extent, the result of a family the biographer himself has created. Expectations, moreover, are simply that, and the emperor himself is the one who has to deal with them.

This argument is perhaps easier to make in negative examples such as the *Galba* in which the emperor deviates from his ancestral mold. But in instances where the emperor does meet expectations, we should ask just how important the role of the family is despite the emperor's apparent conformity to it. For while Suetonius can present a genealogy in such a way that the emperor appears to be the logical result of the family that precedes him, as in the *Tiberius*, examples such as the *Galba* that limit the influence of the family indicate that we should pause before assuming that the difference between the two *Lives* reflects a difference in Suetonius' own expectations of the emperors in each *Life*. An emperor like Tiberius, I will argue, is not somehow more dependent on his family than an emperor like Galba.

Some of my comments may come across as an argument for the obvious. Caligula, for example, was clearly not another Germanicus. Even in such cases of clear defect, however, what is not necessarily obvious is precisely how Caligula differs from his father, or which particular aspects of Germanicus Suetonius has chosen to isolate as a contrast to his son. To reiterate, my goal in this chapter is to examine the genealogies as a rhetorical device in which Suetonius creates a specific set of expectations for the

emperor on the basis of his ancestry and then uses that presentation to separate the emperor from his family. I will start with a brief discussion of Gascou and Wardle's interpretations of the genealogies to make clearer how these sections of Suetonius' *Lives* have previously been understood. Following this, I will use the *Vespasian*, *Titus*, and *Domitian* to establish more firmly the weaknesses of an exclusively hereditary, determinist interpretation. An examination of the remaining instances in the *Lives* that do not conform to this determinist interpretation will demonstrate that the Flavian *Lives* are not an aberration and that the interpretation as stated is inadequate. I will label these examples 'Heredity', and after these *Lives*, I will examine the biographies that contain external or non-biological sources of influence. I will label these examples 'Tradition'. All of this will treat 'negative' examples, or instances where Suetonius does not appear to endorse the transmission of traits or behavior from family to emperor.

After these 'negative' *Lives*, I will consider the biographies that reflect 'positive' examples of 'heredity' and 'tradition'. Again, throughout my entire discussion, the on-going emphasis will be on how Suetonius constructs the genealogies—how he presents them, and what details he chooses to report. The final example that I will discuss in this chapter is the *Nero*, and here I will suggest that Suetonius' purpose in writing the genealogies was neither to validate nor to contradict genetic determinism or external conditioning as such. Such questions, I think, come from a faulty perspective. The fact that Suetonius recognizes that an emperor can deviate from the example of his ancestors, I will suggest, should indicate to us that the biographer's real concern is what the emperor actually does, not who his family is. In order to arrive at this conclusion, we first need to establish that Suetonius is not consistent on the question of heredity and influence so that we are no longer required to be distracted by them, and so that we can then turn our attention to the alternative interpretation that I offer.[25]

[25] Owing to the traditional belief that the very beginning of the *Divus Julius* (as well as the general preface to the *Lives*) is lost, the biography of the dictator will not receive much attention in this section.

The Determinist Question: Gascou and Wardle

Gascou succinctly summarizes his interpretation of the Imperial genealogies: "les ancêstres des Césars leur ont transmis non seulement un nom, une dignité, une position dans la société, mais aussi des vertus et des vices."[26] The latter half of this statement signals Gascou's hereditary interpretation of the genealogies in Suetonius. The virtues and the vices of the emperor's ancestors are passed on to the emperor himself.

Gascou's perspective, however, is that of the modern historian and his explication of the Imperial genealogies proceeds accordingly. Gascou treats Augustus', and only Augustus', lineage by summarizing what Suetonius reports. His aim is to demonstrate that Suetonius' coverage of Augustus' ancestry is fuller, and therefore more useful to the modern historian, than the accounts found in Velleius Paterculus and Cassius Dio.[27] He does not, moreover, resume the interpretation with which he started. Gascou does not question, or even reiterate, the effect that Augustus' ancestors had on him. Instead, he intends these factors to be the primary reason for the relative wealth of information Suetonius provides. Suetonius' belief in the influence of heredity, in other words, led him to provide a wealth of ancestral details that would explain the emperor and that, in a fortuitous coincidence, happens to serve the needs of the modern historian whose interests Gascou represents.[28]

Difficulties arise, however, as soon as we look at other cases. Consider, for example, the marked differences between Drusus and his son Claudius of which there will be more to say later. One might, then, turn to Wardle's arguments for a solution. In direct contradiction to the determinist argument, Wardle adopts the position that Suetonius is unlikely to have entertained claims for the hereditary transmission of

[26] Gascou (1984) 583. See also Bradley (1978) 24. Bradley's comments on the *Nero* will be discussed more fully below, but it is worth noting here his position on Suetonius' coverage of the Domitii: the genealogy is "intended to demonstrate ancestral defects in personality inherited by Nero himself." Bradley, however, is careful not to generalize from this.

[27] Gascou (1984) 584-587.

[28] It is perhaps worth noting in this regard that Gascou devotes only six pages of a work that is eight hundred long to the question of the genealogies in the *Caesares*, (1984) 582-587.

traits. His interpretation is prompted by his observations on the *Caligula*. As I have already suggested, Caligula is a clear case of 'genetic defect', in which the son does not follow his father, and Wardle describes the contrast between Germanicus and Caligula as "absolute."[29]

Wardle finds additional support for his interpretation in the *Nero*. In that *Life*, as I will discuss below, Suetonius prefaces the genealogy with the comment that it was 'as if [the vices of the Domitii] were transmitted and passed down' to Nero. Wardle emphasizes the 'as if' (*quasi*), and states that it "severely undercuts any notion that Suetonius believed in heredity."[30] Though I think Wardle's interpretation is correct, the vices of the Domitii in the *Nero* nevertheless seem a good template for the last Julio-Claudian's vices, and he does not satisfactorily explain the apparent contradiction between his interpretation of Suetonius' 'as if' and the details the biographer reports. Nor, as I have noted, does Gascou consider the Octavii in relation to Augustus after he has asserted the influence of heredity. This failure of observation is likely what prompts the extreme position each scholar adopts, so let me move on to the Flavian *Lives* to demonstrate some of the hazards of locking Suetonius into a particular point of view without adequately consulting the evidence his text provides.

A Father and His Sons: the *Vespasian*, *Titus*, and *Domitian*

The Flavian dynasty represents the only true father-to-son succession in the *Caesares*. Since Titus and Domitian have the same father and mother, a strict application of the determinist interpretation would require that the two men end up recognizably similar. Such a conclusion would of course be no less absurd than an attempt to argue that Titus and Domitian were in fact the same sort of person. It should be noted, moreover, that there is also little resemblance between Vespasian and either of his sons. The Flavians are not three-of-a-kind, nor even a pair in any combination of father, son, or brother. As we shall find, this distinction between family

[29] Wardle (1994) 96; Hurley (1993) 1, as we have already seen, also notes this contrast, but does not generalize from it.
[30] Wardle (1994) 96.

members is not unique to the Flavian *Lives*. The contrast between Germanicus and his son Caligula, for example, is notable in this regard. What makes the Flavians a more useful example with which to start our discussion is that there are three of them, and so they afford us the unique opportunity to follow Suetonius' presentation of successive generations of emperors from the same (biological) family. My interpretation of these *Lives*, moreover, will bring to the fore several ideas that must be kept in mind for the remainder of my discussion: Suetonius' deliberate management of the genealogies, and what specific details he chooses to report; and how Suetonius portrays the emperor in the context of those details.

Suetonius presents the Flavian genealogy in the *Vespasian* and does not repeat it in the *Titus* and *Domitian* (*Vesp*. 1). One may also observe this practice in the biographies of Tiberius, Caligula, and Claudius. Having covered the Claudii in the *Tiberius* (*Tib*. 1-2), Suetonius does not go over the same material in the *Caligula* and the *Claudius*. This suggests, on the one hand, that Suetonius intended the *Lives* to be read in sequence. The Titus and the Domitian, for example, would frustrate a reader who was interested in the origins of the Flavii. Even if we grant this assumption about Suetonius' intentions, however, we should ask whether his willingness to omit the genealogies where possible has additional significance. Though Suetonius rarely cross-references, it would be difficult for his readers to maintain the thread of influence from family to emperor without some reminder of the ancestral features encountered in the previous, relevant *Lives*.[31]

But in the *Titus* and the *Domitian*, in particular, Suetonius introduces his subjects immediately. Titus and Domitian are the first words of their respective biographies. A reader might be persuaded to recall Vespasian in the details that Suetonius next reports—Titus had his father's cognomen, *cognomine paterno*; Domitian was born a month before his father assumed the consulship, *patre consule designato*—but this hardly qualifies as a gesture to Flavian heritage as such, as Suetonius does not proceed to

[31] Note, however, that Suetonius rarely cross-references; see Mouchová (1968) 65.

discuss either individual in the context of Vespasian.[32] Nor, perhaps, should he. If Suetonius' intent is to present the Flavians as three different individuals, he need not festoon the *Life* of one with regular examples from another who has his own *Life*. He can simply talk about Vespasian or Titus or Domitian.

As for the *gens Flavia* itself, the brief genealogy with which Suetonius begins the *Vespasian* focuses on status. The biographer admits that the family's origins were obscure and without *imagines* and attempts to rehabilitate it by demonstrating the *splendor* and *vestustas* of the Vespasii.[33] Suetonius lends an air of credibility to his conclusions by producing evidence of his research into conflicting accounts about Vespasian's grandfather and great-grandfather—'some say [this], but others write [the following]'; and 'I should not omit an account that has been spread [about Titus Flavius Petro, and] although I have looked into the matter thoroughly, I myself have found no proof of this story'.[34] This emphasis on status comes at the expense of Flavian virtues and vices. Suetonius does not, in other words, dwell on any particular patterns of Flavian behavior. Moreover, the biographer makes a show of the supposed lengths to which he has gone in determining the family's origins, validating his claims at the same time as he calls attention to them. His account thus points in the direction of the family as a source of external influence, and this is perhaps reinforced by the fact that Vespasian's mother Polla eventually goads him from his indolence, referring abusively to her younger son as his brother's 'lackey.[35] Polla influences Vespasian, but Suetonius presents the situation as one of direct intervention rather than of passive heredity.

While the interaction between Vespasian and his mother represents familial influence of a kind, and thus indicates Suetonius' recognition of a definite relationship between emperor and family, Vespasian's own management of his heritage should not

---

[32] *Tit.* 1; *Dom*. 1.1.

[33] *gens Flavia, obscura illa quidem ac sine ullis maiorum imaginibus* (*Vesp*. 1.1); *locus etiam ad sextum miliarium a Nursia Spoletium euntibus in monte summo appellatur Vespasiae, ubi Vespasiorum complura monumenta extant, magnum indicium splendoris familiae et vetustatis* (*Vesp*. 1.3).

[34] *etsi quidam eum primipilarem, nonnulli, cum adhuc ordines duceret, sacramento solutum per causam valitudinis tradunt* (*Vesp*. 1.2); *Non negaverim iactatum a quibusdam Petronis patrem…ipse ne vestigium quidem de hoc, quamvis satis curiose inquirerem, inveni* (*Vesp*. 1.4).

[35] *Ea demum extudit magis convicio quam precibus vel auctoritate, dum eum identidem per contumeliam anteambulonem fratris appellat* (*Vesp*. 2.2).

be overlooked. Later in the *Life*, Suetonius implies that the Flavii's roots were a potential source of difficulty for Vespasian. Some men, he reports, attempted to associate the family with Hercules; Vespasian himself, however, 'never attempted to conceal his humble origins and often even put them on display.'[36] Vespasian even insisted that the home of his grandmother Tertulla, where he spent his early years, be kept in pristine condition so that everything would be familiar during one of his frequent visits to the place.[37] The latter two anecdotes suggest Vespasian's careful management of his heritage. They represent deliberate acts. Vespasian parades his origins—note the natural contrast between *dissimulare* and *prae se ferre*—despite others' attempts to reimagine his ancestry, and his habitual visits to his grandmother's house might be construed as contradicting his mother's wishes. She, after all, wanted to 'get him out of the house'.

A reference to the famous judgment of Tacitus might be appropriate at this point: 'Of all the *principes* up to his time, Vespasian was the only one to be improved'.[38] By Suetonius' reckoning, as we have seen, Vespasian did not forget 'who he was' or 'where he came from'. While the conscious reflection on his origins perhaps accords with determinism of a kind for the close relationship between the emperor and his family that it suggests, Vespasian's cultivation of his heritage in the context of what Suetonius reports about the Flavians requires final emphasis. For this cultivation, as Suetonius presents it, has no precedent in the Flavian *gens* itself. Indeed, as the biographer himself notes at the start of the genealogy, it was a family without *imagines*, and so had little to preserve or commemorate. The humble Flavian that Vespasian is, in other words, is a part of a deliberately crafted image. Vespasian had the option of, for example, making himself a descendant of Hercules. That he did not reflects a conscious decision about his family and, paradoxically, thus he sets himself free of the Flavii. For he is, to an extent, a member of it by choice. In the *Lives* of Vepasian's two sons,

[36] *Ceteris in rebus statim ab initio principatus usque ad exitum civilis et clemens, mediocritatem pristinam neque dissimulavit umquam ac frequenter etiam prae se tulit. quin et conantis quosdam originem Flavii generis ad conditores Reatinos comitemque Herculis, cuius monimentum extat Salaria via, referre irrisit ultro* (*Vesp.* 12).
[37] *Quare princeps quoque et locum incunabulorum assidue frequentavit, manente villa qualis fuerat olim, ne quid scilicet oculorum consuetudini deperiret* (*Vesp.* 2.2).
[38] Tac. *Hist.* 1.50: *et ambigua de Vespasiano fama, solusque omnium ante se principum in melius mutatus est.*

Suetonius adopts a similar approach, separating the younger Flavians from their family by presenting them in such a way that the influence of the Flavii is unnecessary or simply absent.

Vespasian's elder son Titus was 'the favorite and the joy of the entire human race,' *amor ac deliciae generis humanis.*[39] This exalted status, however, directly contradicted what people had originally expected of him. For prior to his reign, he was subject 'not only to hatred, but even public abuse.'[40] Suetonius later observes that people thought so badly of Titus, they even expected him to be *alius Nero* on the basis of his supposed *saevitia* and *luxuria*.[41] Vespasian's younger son Domitian, by contrast, ultimately reinforced the ill repute he gained during his early years.[42] By his negative actions after the Vitellian war, Domitian demonstrated to people 'what sort of person [or, perhaps, what sort of *princeps*] he would become.'[43] These are the expectations that people had for Titus and Domitian, and nowhere do the Flavii as such appear as their source.

Instead, Suetonius adduces *ingenium* or *ars* or *fortuna* as the source of Titus' ability to win people over despite his previous reputation, *ad promerendam omnium voluntatem.*[44] The biographer does not speak of any of these three qualities exclusively—he separates them by a string of *vel*'s—and *fortuna* in particular does not suggest the influence of his family, but something quite apart from it. The fact that Suetonius presents these 'options' without deciding on one further weakens any claims for a determinist interpretation. For even if one were to suppose Titus' *ingenium* and *ars* to be the blessings of his genes, Suetonius himself stops short of isolating either as a cause. In order to avoid belaboring the point, we can simply observe that the one quality Suetonius clearly attributes to Domitian during his early years is the *licentia* he

---

[39] *Tit*.1.
[40] *quando privatus atque etiam sub patre principe ne odio quidem, nedum vituperatione publica caruit* (*Tit*. 1).
[41] *Denique propalam alium Neronem et opinabantur et praedicabant* (*Tit*. 7.1). For Titus' *saevitia* and *luxuria*, see *Tit*. 6.2-7.1.
[42] *Pubertatis ac primae adulescentiae tempus tanta inopia tantque infamia gessisse fertur, ut nullum argenteum vas in usu haberet* (*Dom*. 1.1).
[43] *Post victoriam demum progressus et Caesar consalutatus honorem praeturae urbanae consulari potestate suscepit titulo tenus, nam iuris dictionem ad collegam proximum transtulit, ceterum omnem vim dominationis tam licenter exercuit, ut iam tum qualis futurus esset ostenderet* (*Dom*. 1.3).
[44] *tantum illi ad promerendam omnium voluntatem vel ingenii vel artis vel fortunae superfuit* (*Tit*. 1.1).

exhibited in his management of affairs at Rome after Vespasian's victory over Vitellius.[45] This vice is unique to Domitian in the Flavian *Lives*.[46] There is no precedent for it, nor does Suetonius attempt to locate its source in the way that he does for Titus' apparent turn-around. The *licentia* appears as a result of what Domitian does: 'Domitian exercised the full force of his position with such license that it became clear what sort of person [or *princeps*] he would become' (*Dom.* 1.3). Even if one were to remember or refer back to the genealogy of the *Vespasian*, then, the genealogy would be of limited use. Though Titus may have inherited his blessings, Suetonius does not say so; Domitian's *licentia* appears in neither of his predecessors' *Lives*; and, as I have already observed, Suetonius does not in any case impute specific, inheritable traits to the Flavians in the genealogy.

Also absent, moreover, is the sort of influence observed in the interaction between Vespasian and his mother Polla. Both Titus and Domitian are born into straitened circumstances. As one could go and see during Suetonius' own day, Titus' birthplace was shabby, the actual room very small and dark.[47] Domitian, says the biographer, was so poor that he did not even have silverware.[48] As Suetonius presents things, however, both brothers quickly encounter improved circumstances. Titus is educated in Claudius' court alongside Britannicus; Domitian has contact of his own with Rome's elite, among them Clodius Pollio and Nerva, and upon the successful conclusion of the Vitellian war he is hailed as Caesar.[49] The parallelism of these circumstances,

---

[45] *Post victoriam demum progressus et Caesar consalutatus honorem praeturae urbanae consulari potestate suscepit titulo tenus, nam iuris dictionem ad collegam proximum transtulit, ceterum omnem vim dominationis tam licenter exercuit, ut iam tum qualis futurus esset ostenderet* (*Dom*. 1.3).

[46] *Licentia* appears in the *Titus*, but in connection with *delatores* and *mandatores*, not Titus himself, who corrects the problem (*Tit*. 8.5).

[47] *natus est* III. *Kal*. *Ian*. *insigni anno Gaiana nece, prope Septizonium sordidis aedibus, cubiculo vero perparvo et obscuro, nam manet adhuc et ostenditur* (*Tit.* 1). It is worth nothing that Suetonius here reports Titus' death as 41AD, the year of Caligula's death. Elsewhere in the biography, however, he provides the year 39AD (*Tit*. 11; cf., Dio 66.18.4). Associating Titus with Caligula may be a deliberate contrast. Caligula, initially so full of promise, turned out for the worse; Titus, of whom the worse was expected, turned out for the better. For more on Caligula, see below. See also Jones (2002) 91 and Mooney (1930) 467.

[48] *Pubertatis ac primae adulescentiae tempus tanta inopia tantaque infamia gessisse fertur, ut nullum argenteum vas in usu haberet* (*Dom*. 1.1). For recent speculation on the veracity of Suetonius' statement, see Jones (1992) 1 and Southern (1997) 6.

[49] *Tit.* 2; *Dom*. 1.2-3. Suetonius leaves open the question of how Titus went from an impoverished birth to education at the Imperial court. It is possible that Narcissus was responsible, since he appears in the *Titus* and in the *Vespasian*, where he is said to have been responsible for Vespasian's command in Germany (*Vesp*. 4.1).

however, does not lead to parallelism of behavior. As we have already observed, Domitian revealed signs of his *licentia* after his father's victory. Titus, on the other hand, became such good friends with Britannicus that he later commemorated the former heir-apparent with a golden statue.[50] It is readily acknowledged that Titus and Domitian are different from one another despite having the same father. In the rags-to-riches advancement that characterizes both of their early years, Suetonius limits any sense of the direct intervention that appears between Vespasian and his mother. The biographer's readers are then left with the actions of the two younger Flavians, what, that is, Titus and Domitian each do. If the two brothers reflect their father's influence, it is only on the point that, as Suetonius presents them, they are as free of their family as he is.

In sum, Suetonius presents three very different individuals in the Flavian *Lives.* The biographer's account of the Flavian line emphasizes their origins and social status over any specific traits. One would not, therefore, expect to find evidence for heredity throughout these three *Lives* insofar as Suetonius provides nothing for them to inherit. With the exception of Vespasian, the external influence of the family is also, as Suetonius presents it, limited. Suetonius does not present Titus and Domitian in a situation that parallels Vespasian's experience with his mother, and as I have suggested, Vespasian himself makes a clear choice regarding his management of his ancestry. When faced with the decision, Vespasian chose to emphasize the humble origins that his associates sought to conceal. Though this reflects Vespasian's estimation of his family, and implies its influence over him to a degree, the fact that he deliberately chose to preserve the truth of its blemishes also implies his independence from his *gens.* He is free, in other words, to disavow its legacy and rewrite the past in such a way that would better (at least, in the minds of others) account for his accession. Titus and Domitian are free of their family insofar as it does not appear in their biographies, and one might even suggest that this omission serves the biographer's

[50] *Erant autem adeo familiares, ut de potione, qua Britannicus hausta periit, Titus quoque iuxta cubans gustasse credatur gravique morbo adflictatus diu. quorum omnium mox memor statuam ei auream in Palatio posuit et alteram ex ebore equestrem, quae circensi pompa hodieque praefertur, dedicavit prosecutusque est* (*Tit*. 2).

convenience. That is, the 'historical' reality of the two brothers' legacies compelled Suetonius to come up with some sort of explanation for how the two became so different, and their shared origins would only have gotten in the way. On that point, let me reiterate that not only does Suetonius omit the *gens Flavia* as such from both these *Lives*, he almost omits Vespasian as well. Again, the one point of congruity amongst the three Flavians may very well be the independence from their family that Suetonius attributes them.

In the sections that follow, I will examine the remaining *Lives* according to what I think Suetonius is emphasizing in each genealogy, be it inheritable virtues and vices, or external sources of influence like the social status the biographer foregrounds in the *Vespasian*. The sections will be labeled 'negative' or 'positive' according to the emperor's relationship with the example of his family. This will serve partly to reinforce the fact that the Flavians are not a unique case in the *Caesares*, and will also demonstrate the different rhetorical strategies Suetonius exploits in presenting the Imperial genealogies.

Heredity: Negative Example
Caligula, Claudius, and Otho

In this section we shall encounter instances in which Suetonius appears to privilege specific ancestral traits in order to deny the hereditary transmission of traits from family to emperor. This is in contrast to the approach Suetonius adopts in the Flavian *Lives* as I have described it above, and gives greater weight to the idea that the biographer deliberately manages the genealogies to make certain points about the relationship between the emperor and his family. Suetonius does not, in other words, have a single 'formula' for composing the genealogies, and the genealogies therefore should not be interpreted without taking this factor into account.

I will start, just as Suetonius does, with good men. Germanicus was the father of Caligula and Drusus was Claudius' (and Germanicus') father.[51] As I have already observed, Suetonius treats earlier Claudii in the *Tiberius* and so he is not required to cover Germanicus in the *Caligula* or Drusus in the *Claudius* to the extent that he does. He might have proceeded in a manner akin to the *Titus* and *Domitian* and have started simply with Caligula and Claudius themselves, perhaps after some brief comments about their fathers. As Hurley has suggested, however, there could be "no better way for a biographer to begin an estimate of the emperor Gaius than with his father Germanicus Julius Caesar beneath the aegis of whose reputation he assumed the principate."[52] Insofar as Suetonius did not require a foil to make Caligula (or Claudius) look bad when each emperor himself provided material sufficient to justify any negative assessment, there must be some reason why Suetonius chooses to discuss at length Germanicus in the *Caligula* and Drusus in the *Claudius.*

More specifically, Suetonius emphasizes the personal qualities of the two fathers. In the *Caligula*, Suetonius clearly enumerates Germanicus' virtues and their effect on his contemporaries. Germanicus was 'handsome and brave, eloquent and intelligent, well-intentioned [and charismatic]'.[53] As the direct result of these virtues, Suetonius later reports, Germanicus received ample rewards in the approval and respect of his family members and the general public.[54] The joy that greets Caligula's accession is then predicated on the 'memory of his father Germanicus and sympathy for the near extermination of his family'.[55] Though Suetonius does not limit this response to any particular quality of Germanicus, the biographer's earlier emphasis on Germanicus' virtues suggests that what people remembered were those qualities—

---

[51] *Cal*. 1.1; *Claud*. 1.1; *Galba* 2.
[52] Hurley (1993) 1.
[53] *Omnes Germanico corporis animique virtutes, et quantas nemini cuiquam, contigisse satis constat*: *formam et fortitudinem egregiam, ingenium in utroque eloquentiae doctrinaeque genere praecellens, benivolentiam singularem conciliandaeque hominum gratiae ac promerendi amoris mirum et efficax studium* (*Cal*. 3.1). Wardle (1994) 96 points out that relative to Tacitus' account of Germanicus in the *Annals*, "Suetonius suppresses less flattering versions, exaggerates and interprets to create his picture." The biographer has, in other words, made a narrative choice
[54] *Quarum virtutum fructum uberrimum tulit, sic probatus et dilectus a suis…sic vulgo favorabilis* (*Cal*. 4).
[55] *Sic imperium adeptus, p*(*opulum*) *R*(*omanum*), *vel dicam hominum genus, voti compotem fecit, exoptatissimus princeps maximae parti provincalium ac militum, quod infantem plerique cognoverant, sed ea universae plebi urbanae ob memoriam Germanici patris miserationemque prope afflictae domus* (*Cal*. 13).

especially when, as Suetonius observes upon Germanicus' death, people believed that even Tiberius respected and feared Germanicus and so restrained his cruel impulses while the man still lived.[56] Likewise for Claudius, one would not have expected Drusus, a military hero known for his industry and *civilitas*,[57] to father a 'freak' of a son who would become the unfortunate referent in an expression of other people's stupidity, 'dumber than Claudius'.[58] Though Suetonius does not say so, one might rather have expected another Germanicus.[59]

As in the case of Titus and Domitian, these comments on Caligula and Claudius may come across as arguments for the obvious. To say that Caligula was not Germanicus or that Claudius was not Drusus is no revelation. But where the Flavian *Lives* provide no evidence for Suetonius' personal endorsement of heredity, the *Caligula* and the *Claudius* demonstrate that the biographer's position is more complex than a simple denial of genetic inheritance. In these two *Lives*, Suetonius emphasizes the virtues of both emperors' fathers and, again, these are individuals whom he is not necessarily obligated to include in his accounts. This emphasis, in this selective context, suggests that better was expected of both Caligula and Claudius on the basis of qualities that they could have inherited from their fathers, but unfortunately did not.

The *Otho* demonstrates another instance in which a son does not follow his father, but Suetonius' approach this time is to associate father and son with very different people. Otho's father Lucius, says the biographer, was 'so dear to the emperor Tiberius and so similar to him in appearance that many people thought he was the emperor's son'.[60] And later under Claudius, Lucius was rewarded for his detection of an

---

[56] *Auxit gloriam desideriumque defuncti et atrocitas insequentium temporum, cunctis nec temere opinantibus reverentia eius ac metu repressam Tiberi saevitiam, quae mox eruperit* (*Tib*. 6.2). It is worth nothing here that this represents an instance of agreement between Suetonius and Tacitus (cf., Tac. *Ann*. 6.51.3).

[57] Drusus was awarded the triumphal regalia for his military success: *Quas ob res ovandi ius et triumphalia ornamenta percepit* (*Claud*. 1.3). For his industry, see *Claud* 1.2: *transque Rhenum fossas navi et immensi operis effecit*; on his *civilitas*, see *Claud*. 1.4: *Fuisse autem creditur non minus gloriosi quam civilis animi*.

[58] *Mater Antonia portentum eum hominis dictitabat, nec absolutum a natura, sed tantum incohatum; ac si quem socordiae argueret, stultiorem aiebat filio suo Claudio* (*Claud*. 3.2).

[59] Hurley (2001) 71 observes that the verbal abuse noted above occurs in a passage that is filled with Claudius' relatives. Given the affection with which Germanicus' relations—who were naturally the same as Claudius'—regarded him, one might suspect that Suetonius does in fact intend the contrast.

[60] *Pater L. Otho, materno genere praeclaro multarumque et magnarum propinquitatium, tam carus tamque non absimilis facie Tiberio principi fuit, ut plerique procreatum ex eo crederent* (*Otho* 1.2).

assassination plot with a statue, enrollment among the patricians, and the comment from Claudius that the emperor himself could not 'wish to have children better than [Lucius]'.[61] Otho's later assassination of Galba obviously contrasts with the loyalty his father displayed,[62] but more important is that Suetonius attributes Otho's friendship with Nero to the 'similarity of their behavior patterns (*mores*)'.[63] As Mooney has observed, moreover, Otho's habit—which Suetonius reports just before commenting on Otho's similarity to Nero—of randomly assaulting the indisposed and the drunk at night parallels Nero's own nocturnal "escapades."[64] Neither a Lucius Otho nor a Tiberius nor a Claudius, Otho was a 'Nero' before even entering into an association with him, and once again we observe the breakdown of genetic transmission that is the result of Suetonius' management of his material, in which people from outside the Salvii are introduced into the biographer's account of the family.

Otho's degeneration from his parent is less clear than either Caligula's or Claudius'. Suetonius does not praise Lucius as he does Germanicus or Drusus, and the extent to which Lucius was better than Otho is perhaps debatable. Relative merit, of course, is not the same thing as difference, and it is difficult to argue that Suetonius could approve of anyone who acted like a Nero. Alternatively, we can observe that Otho's difference from his father did not necessarily lead to his being better than him, and to the extent that Suetonius emphasizes precisely that difference, he is calling attention to the same fundamental absence of heredity encountered in the *Caligula* and the *Claudius.*

In sum, we can draw three conclusions. Suetonius allows for the possibility that an individual may inherit behavior-patterns (*mores*) from his parent(s). But, second, he is not prepared to consider that inheritance inevitable. One might construe the first as

---

[61] *Vir, quo meliores liberos habere ne opto quidem* (*Otho* 1.3).
[62] *Otho* 6.
[63] *per hanc insinuatus Neroni facile summum inter amicos locum tenuit congruentia morum, ut vero quidam tradunt, et consuetudine mutui stupri* (*Otho* 2.2).
[64] Mooney (1930) 266; see also Shotter (1993) 141. For Otho: *ferebatur et vargari noctibus solitus atque invalidum quemque obviorum vel potulentum corripere ac distento sago impositum in sublime iactare* (*Otho* 2.1); for Nero: *post crepusculum statim adrepto pilleo vel galero popinas inibat circumque vicos vagabatur ludibundus nec sine pernicie tamen, siquidem redeuntis a cane verberare ac repugnantes vulnerare cloacisque demergere assuerat, tabernas etiam effringere et expilare* (*Nero* 26.1).

a set of expectations: Germanicus possessed certain qualities that Caligula was expected to reflect. The second is a comment on whether Caligula met, exceeded, or fell short of those expectations. This leads to the third conclusion, and the question of why Suetonius structures the genealogies to make the point that an emperor like Caligula did not preserve the better part of his ancestry. Insofar as the Flavian *Lives* indicate that an emperor is independent of his family, so the resolution of expectations is to that extent controllable. There would, on the one hand, be little point in commenting on the relationship between the emperor and his family if the emperor himself did not play some part in it. And, on the other hand, the very failure of heredity itself effectively casts the emperor as a man apart.

Tradition: Negative Example
Galba, Caligula, Claudius, Otho, and Vitellius

The possibility and/or expectation of genetic transmission naturally required Suetonius to emphasize certain ancestral traits in order demonstrate the signs of an emperor's deviation from those traits. Suetonius has, as I have argued, more than one way of presenting such scenarios. So, too, for the biographer's study of external sources of influence on the emperors, though we shall find relatively more variety in the way that he constructs this aspect of the relationship between the emperor and his family.

As in the *Vespasian*, Suetonius focuses on status in the *Galba*. At the start of the genealogy, Suetonius himself acknowledges that Galba was 'most distinguished' and a member of a 'great and old family,' the Sulpicii.[65] After noting that Galba was the grandson of Q. Lutatius Catulus (whom Cicero associated with the *praesidia rei publicae*),[66] Suetonius goes on to list other ancestors in a variety of positions: one was propraetor in Spain, another served as *legatus* under Caesar, Galba's grandfather

[65] *Neroni Galba successit nullo gradu contingens Caesarum domum, sed haud dubie nobilissimus magnaque et vetere prosapia* (*Galba* 2).
[66] *Galba* 2; for Cicero, see *Brut.* 222: *Q. etiam Catulum filium abducamus ex acie id est ab iudiciis et in praesidiis rei publicae, cui facile facere possint, conlocemus.*

became praetor, and his father became consul and married Mummia Achaica, who was related to both Catulus and Lucius Mummius, the sacker of Corinth (*Galba* 3.2-4). The biographer prefaces this list, moreover, with the caution that he will summarize this lineage only 'briefly' as it would be tedious to recount in full.[67] This is, in other words, a selective account or summary. The members of the Sulpicii who appear do so only because Suetonius has chosen them, and this deliberate selection suggests some purpose on the biographer's part. That Suetonius emphasizes the offices and social position of these individuals rather than their traits or behavior suggests that it was precisely these offices and positions that attracted the biographer's attention.

Once Galba is born and the details of his birthplace and of his adoption by his stepmother have been recounted, Suetonius immediately places him in the company of Augustus and Tiberius.[68] Both emperors acknowledge the child's future accession in their own way,[69] and though neither is related to Galba, the fact that Galba had access to them maintains the sense of social status that pervades the genealogy Suetonius has just deliberately summarized. One might perhaps even read this lineage as an ascent that peaks with the principate in the persons of Augustus and Tiberius. Tacitus famously wrote that, in the opinion of everyone, Galba would have seemed worthy of empire had he only not actually become emperor.[70] Suetonius' assessment echoes the historian's sentiments,[71] but the social setting of the genealogy he presents for the elderly emperor suggests that the people's disenchantment was based on qualities of statesmanship that Galba ought to have possessed, but did not, as a result of his exposure to the powerful and high-born.[72] For, again, Suetonius makes little reference to specific character traits and people's expectations (in the *Galba*) cannot have been tempered by ancestral qualities the biographer himself does not adduce.

---

[67] *Imagines et elogia universi generis exsequi longum est, familiae breviter attingam* (*Galba* 3.1).
[68] *Galba* 4.1.
[69] Augustus pinches the child's cheek and offers encouragement; Tiberius decides not to execute him.
[70] Tac. *Hist*. 1.49.4: *maior privato visus dum privatus fuit, et omnium consensu capax imperii nisi imperasset*.
[71] *Maiore adeo et favore et auctoritate adeptus est quam gessit imperium, quanquam multa documenta egregii principis daret; sed nequaquam tam grata erant, quam invisa quae secus fierent* (*Galba* 14.1).
[72] One might also assume that, within the confines of Galba's ancestors, an ability to govern should have been 'in his blood' as a consequence of heredity. Suetonius does not, however, focus on this.

This external influence of the family, as opposed to genetic transmission, must be understood as implicit in the *Galba* insofar as Suetonius does not provide examples of direct intervention between family and emperor. Though Suetonius mentions Galba's adoption by his stepmother, for example, he does not indicate that she attempted to teach Galba anything or influence him in the way that Polla did Vespasian. In the remainder of the *Lives* to be discussed in this section, however, attempts at such intervention will be overt. The success of these attempts, however, will be no greater than the situation Suetonius lays out in the *Galba*.

In the *Caligula*, for one, Tiberius indulged his future successor's penchant for dance and song in the hope that these activities might 'tame his wild nature'.[73] And as the letters from Augustus to Livia in the *Claudius* make clear, Claudius was a regular source of concern for the imperial family, which attempted to control his irregular behavior and to assess his fitness for office.[74] That these attempts to correct Caligula and Claudius were undertaken on the one hand suggests a contemporary belief that an individual's behavior could be improved or at least controlled by external influences. The fact that both Caligula and Claudius represent malfunctions of this process, however, indicates Suetonius' recognition of the limits of the power of such influence on the individual. We can, moreover, see that the emperor's contemporaries recognized this. While Caligula's notoriously bad behavior ultimately frustrated Tiberius' hopes, Tiberius himself—'a most observant old man' (*sagacissimus senex*), as Suetonius describes him—suspected that that is what would happen, sometimes saying that he was 'nurturing a serpent for the Roman people and a Phaethon for the world'.[75]

---

[73] *scaenicas saltandi canendique artes studiosissime appeteret, facile id sane Tiberio patiente, si per has mansuefieri posset ferum eius ingenium* (*Cal*. 11).

[74] *Claud*. 4; Suetonius cites three letters from Augustus to Livia on the matter. The first relates (to Livia) a conversation between Augustus and Tiberius about what to do with Claudius, the gist of which is that if Claudius cannot be rehabilitated, he must be kept away from the public in order to spare the Imperial family any embarrasment (4.1-4); as Hurley (2001) 74 observes, the first letter "deals with a matter of genuine concern, the need for a policy in regard to [Claudius'] career. [The] need for a decision was acute because he was 21, an age by which Germanicus was already quaestor." In the second letter, Augustus suggests that Claudius has chosen poor role-models (4.5); and the third expresses Augustus' surprise at Claudius' declamatory ability (4.6). The chapter concludes with Suetonius' comment that Augustus finally judged Claudius unworthy of public office, leaving him only an augural priesthood (4.7).

[75] *quod sagacissimus senex ita prorsus perspexerat, ut aliquotiens praedicaret exitio suo omniumque Gaium vivere et se natricem* [*serpentis id genus*] *p*(*opulo*) *R*(*omano*)*, Phaethontem orbi terrarum educare* (*Cal*. 11).

More intimate, parental intervention is found in the *Otho* and the *Vitellius*. Otho was 'so extravagant and shameless' as a youth that his father Lucius often beat him.[76] And at Vitellius' birth, his parents were so taken aback by the accompanying horoscope that, for as long as Vitellius' father lived, he tried to prevent the assignment of any military command to his son.[77] Murison has suggested that since Otho's father was frequently away from home, the corporal punishment he administered when present may only have aggravated Otho's behavior.[78] He may well be correct—*i.e.*, Lucius identified the problem correctly, but adopted the wrong remedy—but Suetonius himself says nothing of this. Immediately after mentioning these beatings, the biographer relates the nocturnal escapades we noted earlier, and the contrast between Lucius' attempts at correction and what Otho did afterwards suggests that what interests Suetonius is the failure of the former, no matter what the conditions in which it occurred. For Vitellius, the problem centers around the appointments his father prevented him from receiving. Once his father has died, Vitellius is free to do as he pleases, but as Suetonius reports, Vitellius' 'mother immediately gave her son up for lost when he was sent to the legions and declared emperor'.[79] Had Vitellius only followed the wishes of his father, in other words, and declined the post assigned to him, he might have avoided the trouble that awaited him.[80]

In all the above *Lives*, then, the emperor fails to meet the expectations that his external influences anticipate or even desire. The biographer does not, however, 'blame' the families. The Sulpicii, for example, set a good example for Galba. Galba himself simply does not live up to it. And even if Murison's comments on Otho and the punishment he received from his father are correct, their substance does not play a part in Suetonius' account. Suetonius does not suggest that Lucius Otho was wrong to beat his son, but says only that the beatings occurred as a result of Otho's vices. Those

[76] *A prima adulescentia prodigus ac procax, adeo ut saepe flagris obiuragetur a patre* (*Otho* 2.1).
[77] *Genituram eius praedictam a mathematicis ita parentes exhorruerunt, ut pater magno opere semper contenderit, ne qua ei provincia vivo se committeretur* (*Vit.* 3.2).
[78] Murison (1992) 96.
[79] *mater et missum ad legiones et appellatum imperatorem pro afflicto statim lamentata sit* (*Vit.* 3.2).
[80] Venini (1977) has argued that Suetonius' Vitellius is doomed from the very first moments of his life. While there is much to recommend this view, we might also say that 'fate' showed what sort of man Vitellius was when he pursued what his father had forbidden him.

vices continue immediately after the punishment, and what remains is a sense of Otho's incorrigibility. More generally, we can say that the 'failure' of these genealogies sets these emperors apart from their families. In one way or another, these families indicate the proper course of behavior. The emperor himself, however, is presented by Suetonius as acting independently of the model they furnish. And in the cases of Galba and Vitellius, in particular, it should again be noted that Suetonius has arranged their genealogies to make precisely this point.

Tradition: Negative Example
Augustus

The preceding examples have treated 'bad' emperors. Augustus is, of course, a 'good' emperor, and so I have chosen to treat his biography separately from the others. For, perhaps in recognition of Augustus' singularity, Suetonius adopts a unique approach in his account of the Octavii in the *Augustus.* Though his focus in the first *princeps*' biography, as in Galba's and Vespasian's, is status, he does not present his findings in 'summary', and claims that his account of Augustus' distant paternal ancestry is thorough: 'I have not,' he says, 'discovered anything more about Augustus' paternal ancestors'.[81] Most significant, however, is that Suetonius constructs Augustus' genealogy around the opinions of people outside the family—notably, Marc Antony—before rendering a final, 'in-house' judgment.

Suetonius starts by providing the 'many' signs of the *gens Octavia*'s 'excellence'.[82] After giving the details of the family's prominence at Velitrae, Suetonius moves on to its ascent to patrician ranks, the first member to be elected to a magistracy, and how it came about that the *gens* split into a patrician and a plebeian or plebeian or equestrian branch.[83] Suetonius comments that Augustus' branch was the equestrian, and then

[81] *Nec quicquam ultra de paternis Augusti maioribus repperi* (*Aug*. 2.3).
[82] *Gentem Octaviam Velitris praecipuam olim fuisse multa declarant* (*Aug*. 1).
[83] *Aug*. 1-2.2.

briefly summarizes the careers of his great-grandfather and grandfather.[84] Suetonius concludes by presenting two conflicting accounts about the status of the family. Augustus himself wrote that he was from 'an old and wealthy equestrian family, in which his father was the first senator'.[85] Marc Antony, on the other hand, 'abused Augustus, saying that his great-grandfather had been a freedman and a rope-maker from the region of Thurii, and that his grandfather had been a banker'.[86]

Following this controversy, Suetonius relates the career of Augustus' father Gaius Octavius, noting that he 'easily' attained office as a result of his family's wealth, and conducted himself 'admirably'.[87] This brief but laudatory treatment ends with Gaius' death (*Aug.* 3-4.1), and much like modern obituaries leads to next of kin. Augustus' maternal lineage, along with his siblings, now enters and Suetonius notes that Augustus' mother Atia was from a family marked by 'many senatorial *imagines*' and 'very close' to Pompey.[88] Marc Antony again enters the account, this time mocking Augustus for having a maternal grandfather who (allegedly) ran a 'perfume shop' and a 'bakery'.[89] After a brief description of Augustus' birthplace and its reputation as a haunted tourist attraction in Suetonius' own day (*Aug.* 5-6), the biographer notes that Augustus was surnamed Thurinus as an infant. The name, Suetonius reports, commemorated either Augustus' ancestral home of Thurii, or a military victory of his father near the area (*Aug.* 7.1). Whatever the reason, Marc Antony found fault with this name, and often attempted to insult Augustus with letters addressed to 'Thurinus'. Augustus himself expressed surprise that his old name could cause offense.[90]

---

[84] *Proavus Augusti secundo Punico bello stipendia in Sicilia tribunus militum fecit Aemilio Papo imperatore. Avus municipalibus magisteriis contentus abundante patrimonio tranquillissime senuit* (*Aug*. 2.2).
[85] *ipse Augustus nihil amplius quam equestri familia ortum se scribit vetere ac locuplete, et in qua primus senator pater suus fuerit* (*Aug*. 2.3).
[86] *M. Antonius libertinum ei proavum exprobrat, restionem e pago Thurino, avum argentarium* (*Aug*. 2.3).
[87] *amplis enim innutritus opibus honores et adeptus est facile et egregie administravit* (*Aug*. 3.1).
[88] *Atia M. Atio Balbo et Iulia, sorore C. Caesaris, genita est. Balbus, paterna stirpe Aricinus, multis in familia senatoriis imaginibus, a matre Magnum Pompeium artissimo contingebat gradu* (*Aug*. 4.1).
[89] *Verum idem Antonius, despiciens etiam maternam Augusti originem, proavum eius Afri generis fuisse et modo unguentariam tabernam modo pistrinum Ariciae exercuisse obicit* (*Aug*. 4.2).
[90] *Sed et a M. Antonio in epistulis per contumeliam saepe Thurinus appellatur et ipse nihil amplius quam mirari se rescribit pro obprobrio sibi prius nomen obici* (*Aug*. 7.1).

Marc Antony's unkind presence is what drives this account. As Syme observed, Antony did not take the young Augustus seriously.[91] Suetonius' presentation of Augustus' lineage, which emphasizes social standing—to the exclusion of inheritable traits—suggests that Antony behaved in this manner on the basis of Augustus' ancestry. Caesar's judgment, and adoption, of his grandnephew, however, is critical to this interpretation. For the dictator approved the young man's *morum indoles* and *industria* (*Aug*. 8.1). The dictator approved, in other words, things that do not figure into Suetonius' account of the Octavii.

Following the final instance of Antony's jibes against Augustus, Suetonius presents a highly condensed account of Augustus' pre-accession days. Augustus meets his great-uncle in Spain after a difficult journey harried by many enemies, aided by few companions, and impeded by a shipwreck.[92] The journey itself was Caesar's proof of Augustus' *industria*.[93] *Industria* is unique to Augustus (in the *Life*) and appears nowhere in the preceding genealogy. While *morum indoles* is more general and might consist of any number of virtues or habits that Augustus could have inherited or learned, the fact that Suetonius concentrates on the social standing, and not the *mores*, of the individual Octavii throughout his account of them suggests that the biographer does not intend for us to trace Augustus' qualities directly back to his ancestors. He is, in this sense, independent of his family. We should note, moreover, that when Augustus ventures to Rome to enter on his inheritance, he does so against the wishes of his mother and stepfather.[94] One might suggest that this situation reflects Augustus' closeness to his paternal lineage at the expense of the maternal, but we should recall that Caesar was the uncle of Augustus' mother. And it is Caesar who approves of Augustus when his mother and stepfather express reservations.

---

[91] Syme (1939) 115.

[92] *Profectum mox avuculum in Hispanias adversus Cn. Pompei liberos vixdum firmus a gravi valitudine per infestas hostibus vias paucissimis comitibus naufragio etiam facto subsecutus* (*Aug*. 8.1).

[93] *approbata cito etiam morum indole super itineris industriam* (*Aug*. 8.1).

[94] *Ceterum urbe repetita hereditatem adiit, dubitante matre, vitrico vero Marcio Philippo consulari multum dissuadente* (*Aug*. 8.2). Carter (1982) 94-95 has objected to Suetonius' management of his material here: "It is almost *en passant* that we learn that [Augustus'] mother had married again, and the character of L. Marcus Philippus, surely an important influence on his young stepson, is passed over in total silence." Such criticism, reasonable for a historian, does not recognize that Suetonius' agenda does not include the exploration of Philippus' influence on his stepson.

Augustus, then, acts independently of the example set by his ancestors and the most immediate of his family, insofar as Suetonius provides no particular precedent for Augustus' behavior within the Octavii. This does not mean, of course, that Suetonius thinks that Augustus took nothing positive from his ancestry, and the biographer clearly approves of the Octavii. But Suetonius' construction of the family around Marc Antony's disapproval and Augustus' reactions, with the conclusion of Caesar's approval of Augustus, suggests that what matters is the individual himself rather than his family. It is what Augustus does—say, for example, the demonstration of his *industria* and *morum indoles* by his difficulty journey—that is important, and in that sense, he is independent of the Octavii. Marc Antony, in other words, is the only one who judges Augustus as one of the Octavii, and Caesar's judgment of Augustus as an individual ultimately renders his lieutenant's complaints and the basis for them irrelevant. One might even say, in this context, that Augustus is someone exceeds the expectations prompted by his family, and that this is why it ceases to be a factor.

Heredity: Positive Example
Tiberius and Vitellius

Though it is still be necessary to address Suetonius' strategies of presentation in what follows, his endorsement of heredity will become apparent from the simple fact that the traits exhibited by the emperor's ancestors reappear in the emperor himself. This critical difference with the previous section requires that we consider to what extent an emperor who conforms to the example of his family can still be said to be free of it.

The fact that Suetonius did not have to include Germanicus and Drusus in their sons' *Lives* suggested that their presence served a specific purpose. For the fuller genealogies we shall examine now, the first question to ask will be what individuals Suetonius includes and why. In the *Tiberius*, Suetonius expressly adopts a tactic of deliberate summary for the Claudii. After generally characterizing both the plebeian

and the patrician branches of the family for their *potentia* and *dignitas*,[95] Suetonius notes that there are 'many notable examples of both good behavior and its opposite' in evidence, but that he himself will report only the 'primary examples'.[96] A complete genealogy would of course too long, and yet 'primary examples' indicates an unseen process of selection on the biographer's part. The ancestors Suetonius includes are presumably cogent examples of whatever point he is trying to make.

The male members of the line exhibit wisdom of counsel and military prowess,[97] but also unbridled lust, excessive ambition, and 'contempt for religious scruple.'[98] The Claudian women, while noted for their chastity, could also be indiscreet, as exemplified by the Claudia who was tried for *maiestas*, after wishing for a military disaster so that there would be 'less of a crowd at Rome' to impede the progress of her carriage.[99] Suetonius then reasserts the Claudians' devotion to *dignitas* and *potentia*, providing examples of their *violentia* and *contumacia* vis-à-vis Rome's plebeians as a unifying trait common to all the members of the family no matter their individual vices or virtues.[100] 'From this stock,' Suetonius comments, 'Tiberius drew his *genus*'.[101] Given that the ancestors the biographer has chosen to isolate as his 'primary examples' reflect specific traits, this statement about Tiberius' 'stock' comes across as a genetic claim. One can, moreover, draw parallels between the qualities presented in Tiberius' genealogy and information found later in his *Life*, *e.g.*, his military abilities and his sexual excess.[102]

This genetic transmission has parallels in the *Vitellius*, though there is a nuance that distinguishes it from the *Tiberius*. Of the five Vitellian men who precede Vitellius the emperor—Publius, Aulus, Quintus, Publius, and Lucius—not one comes off reasonably well. Suetonius refers only to the elder Publius' rank and attributes no

---

[95] *Patricia gens Claudia—fuit enim et alia plebeia, nec potentia minor nec dignitate—orta est ex Regillis oppido Sabinorum* (*Tib*. 1.1).
[96] *Multa multorum Claudiorum egregia merita, multa etiam sequius admissa in rem p. extant. sed ut praecipua commemorem, Appius Caecus societatem cum rege Pyrro ut parum salubrem iniri dissuasit* (*Tib*. 2.1).
[97] Appius Caecus and Claudius Caudex, respectively (*Tib*. 2.1).
[98] Claudius Regillianus, Claudius Russus, and Claudius Pulcher, respectively (*Tib*. 2.2).
[99] *Tib*. 2.3.
[100] *Praterea notatissimum est, Claudios omnis…optimates adsertoresque unicos dignitatis ac potentiae patriciorum semper fuisse, atque adversus plebem adeo violentos et contumaces* (*Tib*. 2.4).
[101] *Ex hac stirpe Tiberius Caesar genus trahit* (*Tib*. 3.1).
[102] For Tiberius' military achievements, see *Tib*. 9.1-2 and 16-18; for his sexual practices, see *Tib*. 43-45.

specific qualities to him (*Vit.* 2.2). Aulus was an extravagant glutton, Quintus lost his rank when Tiberius decided to rid the senate of its 'less suitable' members, and the younger Publius was arrested for his involvement with Sejanus.[103] Though Suetonius judges Vitellius' father Lucius generally 'harmless and hard-working,' he then notes that he had 'a very bad reputation' for his love of a freedwoman and a 'remarkable talent for flattery'.[104] In the material that follows, moreover, Lucius' 'hard-work' presumably consisted of the flattery with which he was so well endowed, insofar as the only acts that Suetonius relates are Lucius' efforts to garner favor, *e.g.*, removing Messalina's shoes and then carrying one around with him which he sometimes kissed.[105] Vitelllius himself replicated these qualities. His extravagance and gluttony recur throughout his *Life*, his talent for flattery made him a favorite of Nero, and his revolt from Galba might perhaps parallel the younger Publius' involvement with Sejanus.[106]

The transmission of traits is clear enough, but Suetonius' presentation requires brief comment for its difference from what has been observed in the *Tiberius*. In that *Life*, Suetonius adopted a 'greatest hits' approach that called attention to specific individuals and their shared qualities. In the *Vitellius*, Suetonius begins the genealogy with the presentation of a controversy over the origin of the *gens*. 'It was,' says the biographer, 'either ancient and noble, or new, obscure, and even mean'.[107] Suetonius first amplifies the positive account—*i.e.*, he reports Quintius Elogius' claims for the family's distinguished origins at length—and then switches to the negative versions, including a story that one of Vitellius' ancestors was a humble baker.[108] Suetonius finally breaks off the dispute, suggesting that it be left *in medio*.[109] For now that he has recorded the rumors about the Vitelli's distant past, he can proceed with certainty to

---

[103] For Aulus and Quintus: *Vit.* 2.2; for the younger Publius: *Vit.* 2.3.
[104] *vir innocens et industrius, sed amore libertinae perinfamis…idem miri in adulando ingenii* (*Vit.* 2.4).
[105] *Vit.* 2.5.
[106] For Vitellius' extravagance and gluttony, see: *Vit.* 7.1. 7.3, 8.2, 12, esp. 13, 15.1, 15.3, 16, and 17.2; for his flattery: *Vit.* 4; and for his revolt: *Vit.*8.
[107] *Vitelliorum originem alii aliam et quidem diversissimam tradunt, partim veterem et nobilem, partim vero novam et obscuram atque etiam sordidam* (*Vit.* 1.1).
[108] For Elogius' account, see: *Vit.* 1.2-3; for the negative accounts: *Vit.* 2.1.
[109] *Sed quod discrepat, sit in medio* (*Vit.* 2.1).

the behavior of its more recent members: 'Publius Vitellius of Nuceria, at any rate, whether he was from an ancient family or had shameful parents and ancestors, was definitely a Roman knight'.[110] This contrast between uncertainty and certainty moves the *Vitellius* from positive, but disputed, reports about the family's distant past to accepted facts about the negative actions of the people who immediately preceded Vitellius. In a way, then, not only is Suetonius vouching for the accuracy of his account of the Vitelli's behavior, but to the extent that there is congruity between their behavior and Vitellius', he also accepts the validity of heredity.

Both Tiberius and Vitellius thus inherit certain traits from their ancestors. In the case of Tiberius, in particular, the 'greatest hits' approach indicates that Suetonius is deliberately selecting family members who will provide an accurate template for the later emperor. Both emperors, in other words, meet the expectations prompted by their lineage. While I will discuss this problem at greater length in my discussion of the *Nero*, there are several preliminary comments worth making. That Caligula and Claudius diverged from their genetic legacy might indicate that Tiberius and Vitellius could have done so as well. There is no particular reason, in other words, that the failure of heredity must always follow the negative example of a Caligula. The general trend for which I have been arguing throughout my discussion, that Suetonius sees the emperor as an individual ultimately independent of his family, furthermore suggests that even if the emperor cannot avoid inheriting or learning certain things, he might at least control those things later in life. Before moving on to the *Nero*, I will treat a final example of a 'positive' relationship between the emperor and his family that will extend some of these closing arguments in this section.

[110] *Ceterum P. Vitellius domo Nuceria, sive ille stirpis antiquae sive pudendis parentibus atque avis, eques certe R* (*Vit*. 2.2).

Tradition: Positive Example
Tiberius

Suetonius ends his account of the Claudii in the *Tiberius*, as we have seen, with the comment that Tiberius 'drew his *genus* from this stock [*i.e.*, the Claudii]'.[111] The biographer's emphasis on certain of the Claudii's specific character traits suggested that this statement was an endorsement of heredity. Tiberius' genealogy, however, does not end with the Claudii and Suetonius next provides an account of the Livii. Tiberius was a member of this family as a result of his maternal grandmother's adoption into it.[112] To state the obvious, this adoption means that whatever influence the Livii had on Tiberius could not have been the result of heredity. Their potential as a source of influence is therefore likely external.

The switch from the Claudii to the Livii brings with it a shift in emphasis from character traits to social status. 'Although the Livii were plebeian in origin', Suetonius says, 'they flourished' and received many honors: 'eight consulships, two censorships, three triumphs, a dictatorship and a *magister equitum*'. And just as Suetonius chose only 'prime examples' of the Claudii, for the Livii he notes that the *gens* was 'distinguished by exceptional men, in particular Salinator and the Drusi',[113] and then briefly comments on the offices and accomplishments of each (*Tib.* 3.2). This emphasis on the rank and honor of the Livii in the context of their plebeian origins is likely an effort to 'elevate' the family up to the level of the Claudii. One can also detect a similarity in character between the two families. M. Livius Drusus, for example, was an opponent of Gaius Gracchus,[114] and so, like the Claudii, one might suppose him to have the optimate leanings the biographer attributes to that family, though Suetonius does not state this explicitly.

---

[111] *Ex hac stirpe Tiberius Caesar genus trahit* (*Tib*. 3.1).
[112] *Insertus est et Liviorum familiae adoptato in eam materno avo* (*Tib*. 3.1).
[113] *Quae familia quanquam plebeia, tamen et ipsa admodum floruit octo consulatibus, censuris duabus, triumphis tribus, dictatura etiam ac magisterio equitum honorata; clara et insignibus viris ac maxime Salinatore Drusisque* (*Tib*. 3.1).
[114] *Eius abnepos ob eximiam adversus Grachhos operam patronus senatus dictus filium reliquit, quem in simili dissensione multa varie molientem diversa facto per fraudem interemit* (*Tib*. 3.2). Note that Suetonius does not explicitly name M. Livius Drusus, but identifies him as the 'grandson of the grandson' of an earlier Drusus.

Suetonius' presentation of the Claudii and the Livii thus leaves us with a 'coherent' picture of Tiberius' genealogy. There is little 'conflict' between the two families as Suetonius presents them,[115] and so little chance that Tiberius' genetic inheritance would somehow contradict or undermine anything he might have learned from the Livii. On the latter, it is worth noting that while Suetonius seems to endorse the genetic influence of the Claudii explicitly, he makes no comparable claim for the external influence of the Livii. Nor does he need to, insofar as he essentially equates the two families. Between the Claudii and the Livii, the influence of the two families by heredity or otherwise would be indistinguishable. In this particular instance, then, Suetonius' recognition that a family's influence is not an either/or situation in which heredity must operate to the exclusion of any external factors or vice versa. So despite some of the strategies of arrangement we have encountered in the other *Lives*—in which Suetonius privileges one set of influences over another—sources of influence as such are not necessarily the biographer's real concern. They are a malleable feature of the genealogies that Suetonius manipulates to his own ends. As I have argued, Suetonius' purpose is to present the emperor as independent of his family. The case of Tiberius, however, may appear to weaken my argument. For if Tiberius is the sum of his lineage, it is difficult to see how he finally ends up free of it. To answer this question, and to develop a full sense of what Suetonius expects of the emperor as a member of a particular *gens*, let us examine our final example, the *Nero*, which contains, as we shall see, Suetonius' only explicit statement of purpose in these genealogies.

The Domitii: *Tradita et Ingenita*

Nero's lineage, and its influence, appears straightforward. The Domitii were mostly bad, and Nero was worse. The genealogy begins with Lucius Domitius learning of the Roman victory at Lake Regillus from the Dioscuri. The two demi-gods stroke Lucius' beard, turning it from black to red. In good Lamarckian fashion, this trait then

[115] Note, moreover, that Suetonius omits the fact that M. Livius Salinator quarrelled bitterly with his colleague in the consulship and the censorship, C. Claudius Nero.

recurred in many—though not all—subsequent Ahenobarbi (*Nero* 1.1).[116] After a brief discussion of the family's practices with *praenomina*, the biographer himself enters the *Life*. He will give an account of several of the family's members 'so it will become more readily apparent that Nero so degenerated from the virtues of his ancestors that he reproduced only the vices of each as if they had been handed down and transmitted to him'.[117]

As Lounsbury has observed, this is an explicit statement of purpose unlike any in the other genealogies of the Imperial *Lives*.[118] It is the only genealogy in which Suetonius provides any reason for the presence of the emperor's ancestors. Bradley has suggested that the biographer's intrusion is important for "establishing [his] view of Nero's personality." Though Bradley does not say so, his brief attempt to list correspondences between the vices of the Domitii enumerated by Suetonius and those of Nero himself implies that Bradley sees Suetonius as implicitly endorsing the hereditary transmission of traits from past to present.[119] But this cannot be what Suetonius means. The biographer admits that Nero's predecessors had some *virtutes*, but then says that Nero himself degenerated from them. Nero, in other words, ultimately did not possess his ancestral virtues. So while the correspondence of vices between the Domitii and Nero that Bradley identifies might indicate Suetonius' acceptance of the family's influence in the *Nero*, this leaves unanswered the question of what happened to the Domitii's virtues.

Wardle, as I have observed, has suggested that the 'as if' or *quasi* in Suetonius' statement of purpose "severely undercuts any notion that Suetonius believed in heredity."[120] While some of the other *Lives* I have already discussed show this comment

---

[116] Suetonius says only that a 'great part' of the family sported such a beard: *quod insigne mansit et in posteris eius, ac magna pars rutila barba fuerunt.*

[117] *Pluris e familia cognosci referre arbitror, quo facilius appareat ita degenerasse a suorum virtutibus Nero, ut tamen vitia cuiusque quasi tradita et ingenita ret<t>ulerit* (*Nero* 1.2).

[118] Lounsbury (1991) 3751.

[119] Bradley (1978) 29. Bradley identifies the following correspondances between the Domitii and Nero: *petulantia* (*Nero* 2.1 and 26.1; note, however, that Suetonius does not explicitly attribute *petulantia* to the Domitii); *adrogantia* (*Nero* 2.1 and 55; Suetonius again does not explicitly attribute *adrogantia* to the Domitii); *inconstantia* (*Nero* 2.3 and 42ff., but see especially 48; this correspondance is thematic); a love of chariots (*Nero* 4 and 22.2); and *arrogans*, *profusus*, and *immitis* (*Nero* 4 and 26.1, 36.1ff;

[120] Wardle (1994) 96.

to be an overstatement, it should be noted that the Domitii themselves, as Suetonius presents them, do not follow an even path of influence from one ancestor to the next. Nero's great-grandfather, says Suetonius, was 'irresolute and had a savage temper'.[121] Nero's grandfather, however, was 'unquestionably preferable to all the other members of his family'.[122] He was better than his father and all the Domitii who came before him. He was also better than his son, Nero's father, whom Suetonius describes as 'arrogant, wasteful, and cruel'.[123] The sudden peak of improvement represented by Nero's grandfather stands out as an aberration and offers a basis for Wardle's claim that Suetonius rejects the direct influence of the Domitii on Nero.

Owing to its compression, however, Wardle's interpretation of the 'as if' or *quasi* is perhaps persuasive without being conclusive.[124] Another term critical to understanding Wardle's interpretation is the adversative *tamen*, which I have translated as 'only'. If one were to remove the *tamen* from the sentence—*ita degenerasse a suorum virtutibus Nero, ut vitia cuiusque quasi tradita et ingenita ret<t>ulerit*—the sentence would still make grammatical sense, but its logic would be obscure. At best, one might force the idea from it that Nero turned the Domitii's virtues directly into their vices. This is likely not what Suetonius is saying,[125] and the *tamen* contrasts what happens to the virtues and the vices. The latter remain while the virtues disappear, and Suetonius focuses on just this point when he specifies the nature and the number of the vices Nero reproduced. The biographer says that Nero reproduced the vices 'of each member (*quisque*) of the Domitii'. This unerring accuracy is in contrast to the family's missing virtues and prompts the perhaps surprised 'as if (*quasi*) they had been passed down and transmitted'. It is not that Nero's vices were the legacy of the Domitii, but that Nero reproduced their vices in every possible instance so that one might think they were.

---

[121] *vir neque satis constans et ingenio truci* (*Nero* 2.3).
[122] *Reliquit filium omnibus gentis suae procul dubio praeferendum* (*Nero* 3.1).
[123] *Verum arrogans, profusus, immitis censorem L. Plancum via sibi decedere aedilis coegit* (*Nero* 4.1).
[124] The use of *quasi* that Wardle is suggesting is not without precedent in Suetonius or even the *Nero*. Suetonius describes a procession held by Gnaeus Domitius after he defeated the Allobroges and the Arverni. After this victory, Gnaeus rode through his province on an elephant 'as if in a triumphal procession', *quasi inter sollemnia triumphi* (*Nero* 2.1). Gnaeus' procession is clearly not a proper triumph.
[125] As we shall see in **Chapter 3**, when Suetonius claims that an emperor has changed his virtues into vices, he is much more explicit (*Dom*. 3.2).

Again, the problem, as Suetonius identifies it, is that if Nero received the Domitii's vices, there must be an explanation for why he did not also receive their virtues.

Suetonius thus presents Nero as independent of his family. The similarity of his vices to those of his predecessor's may identify him as one of the Domitii, but the absence of their virtues also sets him apart from them. However one interprets Suetonius' statement of purpose, it is clear that the biographer does not claim that the Domitii are responsible for the virtues that Nero lack. Nero himself is the subject of the sentence, and he is the only individual who can be responsible for the sloughing off of virtue that Suetonius portrays. It is worth asking, moreover, whether the biographer would have issued a statement of purpose for a genealogy whose only goal was to demonstrate that Nero's vices came directly from the family members it purported to record. This would hardly seem to require justification. The interpretation for which I have been arguing, however, might come as a surprise, nor does it mean that Suetonius denies the influence of the Domitii in the *Nero* altogether. Suetonius does not say that the Domitii did not influence Nero, but only that the presence of their vices and the absence of their virtues in Nero was not their responsibility. In a perhaps odd paradox, what Suetonius is suggesting in the *Nero* is that for as bad as the Domitii were, Nero would have been better had he been more like them.

The biographer's inclusion of *ingenita* and *tradita* in the *Nero* is also significant. *Ingenita* is hapax in Suetonius and so it is impossible to compare his usage in the *Nero* to another part of his corpus. The context in which it occurs in the *Nero*, however, at least allows us to make a reasonable case for its general meaning. It likely does not refer to Nero's inherent traits or qualities as such, insofar as there would be little point in discussing those in a genealogy. It refers instead to the possibility that the emperor inherited those traits or qualities from his family. Suetonius uses *tradere* as a perfect passive participle five other times in the *Caesares*. The most relevant example comes from the *Tiberius*, in which Suetonius speaks of the *mos traditus* that prevented the strangulation of virgins (*quia mores tradito nefas esset virgines strangulari*; *Tib*. 61.4). The use of *tradere* in this passage indicates the deliberate preservation of a practice (or,

perhaps more generally, a behavior) and guides our interpretation of the *Nero*'s statement in the same direction.[126] Suetonius, in other words, is speaking of some sort of instruction that may have led Nero to behave in a certain manner.

More generally, the presence of both together (*i.e.*, *tradita et ingenita*, rather than *aut* or *vel*) indicates that Suetonius does not conceive of a family's influence on an individual as an 'either/or' scenario between heredity and external sources of influence. For our purposes, this willingness to blend the two spheres may suggest that the distinction between them is, in a practical sense, irrelevant to Suetonius. As I have argued throughout this chapter, Suetonius carefully manages his presentation of the emperor's family and builds up a set of expectations for the emperor on the basis of the family he constructs. That his purpose, however, is to set the emperor apart from his family in a demonstration of how he meets, exceeds, or falls short of those expectations indicates that the expectations themselves are of only incidental concern. Whether or not they are congenital (*ingenita* or *tradita*) is not the point. In the exploration of the relationship between the emperor and his family, Suetonius ultimately emphasizes the role of the emperor over his family. Even in the *Nero*, where it would be easy to understand Nero as the incarnation of the worst of the Domitii, Suetonius adopts the less convenient course, placing Nero perhaps alongside his family rather than in it or at the end of it. Though the emperor may be free of his family, he is not without burden. For in the absence of an ancestral excuse, the emperor himself is responsible for the *princeps* he becomes. In the next chapter, I will extend this argument into the sphere of one of the long-standing areas of dispute in the *Caesares*. The physical descriptions that Suetonius provides for each of the emperors, I will argue, are best understood in the same general context as the genealogies. Just as Suetonius places the weight of responsibility on the emperor in his relationship with his family, so too does he emphasize the emperor's responsibility in his relationship with his body.

[126] *Tib*. 61.4 and 61.5, *Cal*. 44.2, *Vit*. 14.2, and *Dom*. 17.1. The remaining examples might easily be translated literally as 'handed-over', but all the instances—and the *Tiberius*, in particular—make clear that the *Nero*'s *tradita* refers to behavior or traits that the Domitii could have conditioned Nero to rather than passed him to by blood.

Chapter 2: 'Portraits'

Suetonius' physical descriptions of the emperors have been a topic of enduring scholarly interest. These 'portraits,' as they are sometimes called, contain information ranging from their subject's height and weight and eye and hair color to less obvious features such as the condition of his teeth. Suetonius sometimes includes the emperor's style of dress, and even non-visual elements such as body odor. While literature dating back to Homer contains physical descriptions, the scale of those in the *Caesares* is unattested in the biographical-historiographical tradition before Suetonius. Nor can this necessarily be attributed to contemporary, literary practices. Tacitus, for one, tends to be rather spare when it comes to the appearance of his subjects.[127]

Since strictly literary habits fail to account for the inclusion of the physical descriptions in the *Caesares*, scholars have tended to invoke Leo's reconstructed Alexandrian biography to explain them.[128] The first step was Misener's work on 'iconistic,' literary portraiture.[129] According to her argument, the descriptions in the *Caesares* are 'iconistic' or 'photographic' because that is how the Alexandrian biographers of Leo's tradition would have written descriptions. From the putative level of detail contained within these descriptions—they are, supposedly, literary photographs—Evans proposed that the ancient 'science' of physiognomy must *ex hypothesi* be associated with Suetonius.[130] Alexandrian biography, after all, was a Peripatetic tradition, and the Peripatetics had themselves produced the first physiognomic treatises, in which certain physical features were associated with specific character traits: the shape of a person's nose, for example, might reveal that he or she is a paragon or a pervert. According to Evans, then, Suetonius' descriptions of the emperors' appearance were to be taken as an index of their character.

---

[127] Tacitus follows Vergil's *pars pro toto* approach, as explained by Adams (1980) 50-62-; see also Baldwin (1983) 498.
[128] Leo (1901).
[129] Misener (1924) 97-123.
[130] Evans produced several studies on the influence of physiognomy in Roman literature, all of which are included in the bibliography. Her most fully developed arguments can found in *Physiognomics in the Ancient World* (1969).

The scholarly investigation of this question has since stagnated. Though recent work on select *Lives* of the *Caesares* has expressed hesitancy about the applicability of physiognomic precepts to Suetonius' portraits, it provides no alternative to explain their prominence, and, for lack of a more compelling model, reproduces Evans' arguments when the question of the emperors' appearance does arise.[131]

Our first task therefore is to confirm the doubts that have been expressed about physiognomy and Suetonius, and to demonstrate that the teachings of the ancient science do not apply to the biographer's descriptions of the emperors' appearance. For the sake of brevity, and to avoid tedium, I will limit my discussion to a select summary of the interpretation of Julius Caesar's features, but **Appendix A** contains a fuller treatment of the history and theory of physiognomy. After this examination, I will proceed to my own interpretation of the portraits. This discussion will generally be arranged by parts (*e.g.*, face, legs, etc.).

In the preceding chapter, I argued that Suetonius' primary concern in the genealogies is to 'free' the emperor from his family. By making the emperor independent, Suetonius steers our attention away from the *gens* and what it did and towards the *princeps* and what he is doing. In this chapter, I will continue that argument and suggest that Suetonius presents the physical descriptions of the emperors to ask what the emperors are doing, but from a perspective that we have not yet explored. Physical blemishes, I will argue, are not always damning. Suetonius' concern in such instances is how the emperor responds to his defects. Physical attractiveness, however, is not automatically a virtue, and Suetonius' concern in these instances is still how the emperor responds. There are, moreover, several instances where Suetonius uses the physical descriptions for purposes that are peculiar to an individual *Life*. These will be discussed in the **Height, Age, and Good Looks** section. Having completed my examination of the portraits, I will conclude with some general comments that will link my interpretation of the physical descriptions to the topic of the next chapter.

[131] See both Hurley (1993) 178-180 and Wardle (1994) 323-330 on the *Caligula*; Bradley (1978) 281-283 on the *Nero*. See also Wallace-Hadrill (2004 [1983]) 22n.34.

The Physiognomy of the *Caesares*

Suetonius provides descriptions for all twelve of his subjects, as well as for the fathers of both Caligula and Galba.[132] They vary in length and in detail. Some features are mentioned more than others, and some are infrequent or peculiar. For the sake of convenience, we can tabulate some of the physical features Suetonius includes:

Hair: Caesar, Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Nero, Galba, Otho, Domitian
Face: Caesar, Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Nero, Vespasian, Domitian
Complexion: Caesar, Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Vitellius, Domitian
Eyes: Caesar, Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Nero, Galba, Domitian
Clothing: Caesar, Augustus (*Aug*. 57.1), Caligula, Nero, Otho
Limbs: Caesar, Augustus, Tiberius, Vespasian
Nose: Augustus, Galba
Teeth: Augustus
Ears: Augustus
Height: all

This list alone is enough to establish that Suetonius' portraits are not in fact 'iconistic' or 'photographic' in the way that Misener and Evans imagine. If we consider the appearance of the emperor's face, Augustus' is the fullest. The other eleven have neither ears nor teeth; ten have no nose; six have no complexion; five have no visible expression and lack eyes; and four lack a discernible hair-style. There is nothing here to suggest photographs rich in the details ripe for physiognomic interpretation.

Evans and Couissin both accept Misener's concept of 'iconism' in the portraits. Contrary to Misener, however, both scholars believe the descriptions are also physiognomic.[133] What is curious, and telling, for Couissin's and Evans' work is that though both scholars endorse Suetonius' physiognomic orthodoxy, they seldom agree

[132] *Jul*. 45; *Aug*. 79-83; *Tib*. 68; (*Cal* 3.1); *Cal*. 50-52; *Claud*. 30-31; *Nero* 51; (*Galba* 3.3-4); *Galba* 21-22; *Otho* 12.1; *Vit*. 17.2; *Vesp*. 20; *Tit*. 3; *Dom*. 18-19.

[133] Evans, relying on Leo's reconstruction of Alexandrian biography, emphasizes the 'iconistic' quality of Suetonius' portraits. If Suetonius is working within the (Peripatetic) Alexandrian biographical tradition, it makes her claim that he is also reading physiognomic, Peripatetic treatises seem stronger. However, interpretation of any sort—including physiognomic—could be anathema to the fundamentally objective spirit of Leo's concept of Alexandrian biography, hence Misener's opinion: "These [Suetonian] descriptions have no physiognomical significance, although the language recalls the technical vocabulary of the handbooks," (1924) 118. Evans (1935) 61n.2, declared this position in need of "reconsideration." See also Couissin (1935) 234-256. Note that Gascou would later adopt Misener's view, stressing "une fidélité méticuleuse à la réalité," (1984) 615

on which of the available physiognomic interpretations is to be applied to Suetonius' portraits.[134]

Suetonius introduces Caesar's textual portrait by means of a formal *divisio*: 'it will not be irrelevant to summarize the things that relate to [Caesar's] *forma*, *habitus*, *cultus*, and *mores*, as well as the things that pertain to his civil and military pursuits'.[135] Under the rubric *forma*, Suetonius mentions five obvious physical features: height, complexion, the limbs, the face or the mouth, and, finally, the eyes. Couissin pursues a clearly marked agenda, understanding these features of Caesar's physique as the physiognomic 'signs' of the dictator's "génie hyperactif."[136] Evans, though working with the same set of features, manages to arrive at an interpretation that is almost the direct opposite of Couissin's, finding negative qualities where Couissin sees virtues.

Three primary factors contribute to this lack of resolution. First, and most important, Suetonius' descriptions simply do not meet the level of physical detail required by the physiognomic treatises. Even if one accepts Misener's designation of 'photographic', it remains difficult also to label the biographer's descriptions 'physiognomic'. Caesar's complexion, according to Suetonius, was white (*candidus*; *Jul.* 45.1). Couissin adduces relevant passages from Appian, Plutarch, and Adamantius' abridgement of Polemon's physiognomic treatise. "The talented man," says Adamantius, "should be as follows. He is of good size, he is white (λευκός), reddish, and yellow (ὑπέρυθρον ξανθόν)."[137] This passage matches Suetonius' description to a degree (*candidus* and λευκός), but adds red and yellow (ὑπέρυθρον ξανθόν). It is unclear precisely what sort of appearance Adamantius imagines here, but our question

---

[134] For some time, Foerster's two-volume Teubner edition was the only commonly available text of the extant physiognomic treatises (1893), and is the edition to which both Couissin and Evans refer. The treatises have recently been re-edited and, in some cases, translated into English for the first time in Swain (2007). As this is the most recent edition of the treatises, and likely to become the standard text, my citations from the treatises will refer to the Swain rather than the Foerster edition. Finally, because some of these treatises survived only as Arabic translations that were then translated back into Latin or Greek at some unknown later date, all quotations from the treatises will be taken from the translations in Swain's edition. For a full discussion of the textual tradition of the treatises, see Swain (2007) 2ff.

[135] *ea quae ad formam et habitum et cultum et mores, nec minus quae ad civilia eius studia pertineant, non alienum erit summatim exponere* (*Jul.* 44.4).

[136] Couissin (1953) 242: "Les quatre traits relevés par Suétone ont donc une signification convergente; et il est frappant que celle-ci soit, précisément, en conformité rigoureusse avec ce caractère de génie hyperactif qui est celui prêté par Suétone à César tout au long du récit de sa vie."

[137] Couissin (1935) 241.n2; τὸν δὲ εὐφυῆ τοιοῦτον εἶναι χρή· μεγέθους εὖ ἥκοντα, λευκὸν ὑπέρυθρον ξανθόν (B46); cf., Anon. Lat 92 and *Physiognomonica* 807^{b}14-19.

needs to be whether the red and yellow missing from Suetonius' description of the dictator's complexion are significant or not. Couissin is comfortable dismissing such questions as "subtilités inutiles,"[138] but for a discipline as concerned with minute details as is physiognomy, the disconnect between the wealth of information its treatises provide and the details Suetonius reports ought to be important to those who would interpret the *Caesares* physiognomically.

Second are the contradictory interpretations Couissin and Evans offer for Caesar's appearance after reading the same physiognomic treatises. Citing Adamantius, Couissin argues that Caesar's 'elegant limbs' (*tereta membra*; *Jul.* 45.1) signify the same traits as his complexion, with the added quality of courage. The εἶδος of the brave man, according to the manual, is "upright in its general carriage, strong in the flanks, all joints and extremities of the body, with big bones...fleshy legs, strength around the ankles, well-jointed feet."[139] Evans also cites Adamantius' text, but locates an interpretation that contradicts Couissin's. Adamantius says that "thin and weak flanks indicate unmanliness and cowardice, those which are very hard and fleshy ignorance, those which are rounded and full, as if swollen, nonsense and malice."[140] The contradiction between Couissin and Evans is clear. What is less clear is that either scholar has correctly identified an appropriate passage to apply to Suetonius. Caesar's limbs or *membra* are not the same thing as his 'flanks' or πλευραὶ, and we can observe here that precisely how Couissin and Evans understand something like *candidus* or *membra* is naturally going to affect which passages they select from the treatises. The contradictory interpretations we have noted may therefore start with the modern scholars, rather than the treatises. If not for the relative dearth of information that Suetonius provides, this factor might leave the possibility for physiognomy's influence on Suetonius wide open.

---

[138] Couissin (1935) 234n.1.
[139] Couissin (1935) 241n.3; εἶδος οὖν ἀνδρείου ὄρθιον τὸ πᾶν σχῆμα πλευραὶ καὶ ἄρθρα πάντα καὶ τὸ ἄκρα τοῦ σώματος ἐρρωμένα, ὀστέα μεγάλα...σκέλη σαρκώδη, περὶ τοῖς σφυροῖς καρτερία, πόδες ἀρθρώδεις...(B44).
[140] πλευραὶ λεπταὶ καὶ ἀσθενεῖς ἀνανδρίαν, δειλίαν, αἱ δὲ πάνυ σκληραὶ καὶ σαρκώδεις ἀμαθίαν, αἱ δὲ περιφερεῖς καὶ πλήρεις, ὡς οἰδοῦσαι, φλυρίαν καὶ κακοήθειαν σμαίνουσιν (B13); see Evans (1935) 77.

We should therefore note the third and final difficulty with the physiognomic interpretation of the *Caesares*. Both Couissin and Evans fixate on Caesar's *forma* to the exclusion of the *habitus* and *cultus* also mentioned in the *divisio*. Both invariably attend the biographer's descriptions of his subjects' *forma*. They are, moreover, a visible part of an emperor's appearance. Physiognomy of course does not concern itself with matters external to the body, but this leads to the question why Suetonius—as physiognomist—would bother to include such details as dress and grooming habits—not to mention the (usually) non-visual eating and drinking habits that regularly accompany the portraits. Suetonius exceeds the bounds of what physiognomy encompasses, providing information about things that are neither permanent nor corporeal and certainly not physiognomic.

The Caesars and their Bodies

This brings us to a larger question, whether the biographer has need of physiognomic precepts in the first place. Physiognomy, as explained in the pseudo-Aristotelian *Physiognomonica*, is concerned with permanent signs of permanent characteristics.[141] While static character may be the normal discovery of each of Suetonius' *Lives*, the biographer's chief concern, as I have argued in the preceding chapter, is what the emperor does, and character as such is important only in that context.

There is little reason to suppose that Suetonius will treat the emperors' bodies, or personal habits, any differently than any of the other topics he covers in the *Caesares*. In the portrait of Tiberius, for example, Augustus attempts to excuse some of his eventual successor's irksome habits by describing them as 'faults of nature', not 'faults of will'. The faults are pardonable because Tiberius does not manifest them consciously or deliberately. They are not something, according to Augustus, he can

[141] *Phys*. 806[a]7-10: ὅσα μὲν οὖν τῶν σημείων μόνιμά ἐστι, μόνιμον ἄν τι καὶ σημαίνοι· ὅσε δὲ ἐπιγινόμενά τε καὶ ἀπολείποντα, πῶς ἂν τὸ σημεῖον ἀληθὲς εἴη τοῦ ἐν τῇ διανοίᾳ μὴ μένοντος;

control. Tiberius' contemporaries, however, did not believe this,[142] and the anecdote nonetheless steers us in the right direction. For it is in this vein that Suetonius introduces the emperors' appearance. He does not parade their features as physiognomic signs of who or what they are, but of what they can control and how they choose to do so, how their decisions alter or affect their appearance. This explains the inclusion of details like dress, grooming, and non-visual elements like eating and drinking habits. They are related to the body, without being of it in the manner required by physiognomy. But these are things the emperor can control about his appearance and/or his body.[143]

Clothing

Although clothing is not a strictly physical feature, it appears in nearly half of the portraits. Suetonius includes style or manner of dress in the *Lives* of Caesar, Augustus, Caligula, Nero, and Otho. While clothing is not a part of the emperor's body, it is both a part of his appearance and the result of a deliberate choice. The fact that clothing is an example of how the emperor's decisions can affect his appearance makes it a useful starting point for our discussion. As it provides the lone positive example in this section, we shall start with the *Augustus* in order to understand better what makes the remaining examples negative.

Suetonius mentions Augustus' clothing on two occasions. The first instance arises out of the biographer's description of the 'thrift' of Augustus' household. Much

[142] Suetonius says only that Augustus tried to excuse Tiberius' faults on more than one occasion, not that he suceeded: *excusare temptavit saepe apud senatum ac populum professus naturae vitiae esse, non animi* (*Tib*. 68.3).
[143] Stok (1995) has recently argued along these lines, adopting what he calls a 'diagnostic' physiognomy that is 'medical' when Suetonius speaks strictly of the *corpus*, but 'diagnostic' or 'moral' when he speaks of the *animus*, as in the example of Tiberius and Augustus above. The difficulty is that Stok does not successfully merge these separate spheres of medicine and ethics, and treats only those instances that move in a negative-to-positive direction. Though he rightly observes that Caligula's thin legs have an available remedy in the example of his father Germanicus' behavior (negative-to-positive), for example, when speaking of Caligula's unpleasant facial expression, Stok notes only that the description is "unequivocal," and overlooks the fact that Caligula deliberately altered his expression for the worse, *ex industria* (negative-to-negative); see *Cal*. 50.1 and below).

of Augustus' furniture was 'barely worthy of an ordinary citizen's taste'.[144] This modesty is then reflected in Augustus' clothing. Augustus, Suetonius says, 'usually wore clothing made for him at home by his sister, wife, daughter, or granddaughters. His togas were neither too tight, nor too loose; his purple stripe was neither wide nor narrow'.[145] As Carter has observed, a toga that was either too tight or too loose was an "affectation."[146] And Adams comments that too wide a purple stripe would have been ostentatious.[147] For too narrow a stripe, on the other hand, we might suspect a sign of false modesty.

Perhaps more important than the moderation that Augustus' clothing reflects is that his choice of clothing means also that Augustus looked more or less like everyone else around him. He did not draw attention to himself, and so was unlikely to cause offense on this particular point. The second time that Suetonius mentions Augustus' clothing, the context is the care of the body and Augustus' tendency towards illness. In the winter, Augustus 'fortified himself with four tunics and a thick toga, an undershirt and a chest covering made of wool, and bandage-like wraps around his thighs and shins'.[148] He was so sensitive to the sun, moreover, that even in the winter he never went out without a 'broad-billed hat made of felt'.[149] We can again observe a deliberate choice behind Augustus' attire. Adams has noted that Augustus' habit of wearing four tunics would not have been normal, but Suetonius presents these practices as remedies for ill health.[150] Suetonius gives no indication that Augustus dressed in this manner to draw attention, nor does he suggest that Augustus' dress caused offense. Both of these two factors will figure prominently in the example we shall now examine.

---

[144] *Instrumenti eius et supellectis parsimonia apparet etiam nunc residuis lectis atque mensis, quorum pleraque vix privatae elegantiae sint* (*Aug*. 73).
[145] *Veste non temere alia quam domestica usus est, ab sorore et uxore et filia nepotibusque confecta*; *togis neque restrictis neque fusis, clavo nec lato nec angusto* (*Aug*. 73).
[146] Carter (1982) 195 compares Cato (tight) and Maecenas (loose). Adams (1939) 189 adds the observation that too loose a toga would be taken as a sign of effeminacy.
[147] Adams (1939) 189-190.
[148] *Hieme quaternis cum pingui toga tunicis et subucula e<t> thorace laneo et feminalibus et tibialibus muniebatur* (*Aug*. 82.1); for the identification of some of these items, see Adams (1939) 197.
[149] *Solis vero ne hiberni quidem patiens, domi quoque non nisi petasatus sub divo spatiabatur* (*Aug*. 82.1). As Adams (1939) 197 notes, this hat was normally worn by travellers, hence Suetonius' observation that Augustus wore one even when at home.
[150] Adams (1939) 197.

Suetonius expressly characterizes Caesar as being 'too meticulous' (*morosior*) about the care of his body.[151] As the final example of this trait, the biographer notes that Caesar wore a fringed tunic and draped his toga over it in an unusual way. This prompted Sulla's frequent (*saepius*) warning to Caesar's contemporaries that they 'should be wary of the strangely-girt boy'.[152] While Caesar's attire is obviously voluntary, the critical difference between the dictator's dress and Augustus' is the judgment it invites from both Suetonius and Caesar's contemporaries. Even if the comparative 'too meticulous' does not suggest the biographer's disapproval of Caesar on this point, Sulla's repeated warnings indicate that contemporaries certainly disapproved. While it cannot be said that Caesar dressed the way he did to aggravate those around him, Sulla's complaints indicate that Caesar's appearance caused offense.[153]

In the *Nero* Suetonius clearly judges the emperor's appearance. Nero, he says, was 'completely shameless in the care and adornment of his body'. The emperor often went out in public dressed in a festive dining-robe (*synthesina*), shoeless, and with an ascot tied about his neck.[154] In Suetonius' account, Nero does not arouse public resentment at his appearance. The description of Nero's clothing, however, evokes a clear image of someone who could have attracted attention for his unusual attire, and Suetonius' own judgment of the emperor as 'completely shameless' fills the void left by Nero's missing contemporaries. In the *Otho*, Suetonius similarly uses his judgment of the emperor's appearance to explain what people might have thought upon seeing their emperor. 'Neither Otho's physique nor his dress', Suetonius begins, 'anticipated his great spirit [as manifested by suicide]'.[155] On the specific question of Otho's dress, Suetonius reports that the emperor often wore the linen vestments of the cult of Isis in

---

[151] *Circa corporis curam morosior* (*Jul*. 45.2).
[152] *Etiam cultu notabilem ferunt*: *usum enim lato clavo ad manus fimbriato nec umquam aliter quam <ut> super eum cingeretur, et quidem fluxiore cinctura*; *unde emanasse Sullae dictum optimates saepius admonentis, ut male praecinctum puerum caverent* (*Jul*. 45.3).
[153] Butler&Cary (1927) 108 suggests Caesar the "dandy."
[154] *Circa cultum habitumque adeo pudendus, ut comam semper in gradus formatam peregrinatione Achaica etiam pone verticem summiserit ac plerumque synthesinam indutus ligato circum collum sudario prodierit in public sine cinctu discalciatus* (*Nero* 51).
[155] *Tanto Othonis animo nequaquam corpus aut habitus competit* (*Otho* 12.1).

public.[156] 'Because of these things [including Otho's dress], I think that Otho's suicide excited the contemporary imagination.[157] Neither Nero's nor Otho's clothing arouses the contemporary criticism Caesar received. Yet Suetonius offers his own opinion of both emperors' attire, and in Otho's case even speculates about what his contemporaries might have thought about their emperor based on his appearance.

Nonetheless it is the *Caligula* that offers the best evidence for Suetonius' general complaint about poorly attired emperors. Suetonius starts his description of Caligula's dress with the comment that in his choice of clothing, shoes, and other articles, the emperor did not follow the customs of his 'country, fellow citizens, gender, or even of mortals'.[158] In describing Caligula's various outfits—among them, a woman's robe and shoes and garb meant to convey the image of Jupiter or Venus (*Cal.* 52)—Suetonius notes that, just like Nero, Caligula often appeared in public in these costumes.[159]

The more flamboyant of Caligula's decisions—appearing in public like Jupiter or dressed like a woman—are clearly inappropriate, but Suetonius' judgment moves in ascending fashion from country to divinity. That is, it proceeds from the relatively mundane to the extreme (and normally unlikely). Again, the emperors' attire is a matter of their personal preference and choice. Unlike Augustus, neither Nero nor Otho nor Caligula—and to a lesser extent, Caesar—looks like their fellow citizens as a result of the choices they have made about their clothing. Only Caesar attracts the attention of his peers in Suetonius' account, but Suetonius' own judgments compensate for this lack with the remaining emperors, of whose attire it is difficult to imagine many Romans approving. As we shall presently see in the next section, people may not have voiced their objections to Caligula's attire because it might have been dangerous to do so.

---

[156] *sacra etiam Isidis saepe in lintea religiosaque veste propalam celebrasse* (*Otho* 12.1).
[157] *Per quae factum putem, ut mors eius minime congruens vitae maiore miraculo fuerit* (*Otho* 12.2).
[158] *Vestitu calciatuque et cetero habitu neque patrio neque civili, ac ne virili quidem ac denique humano semper usus est* (*Cali.* 52).
[159] *Saepe depictas gemmatasque indutus paenulas, manuleatus et armillatus in publicum processit* (*Cal.* 52).

Hair

Hair is a common feature in Suetonius' portraits of the emperors, and in this section we shall concern ourselves with seven of the Caesars. Unlike the previous section, I will start with the negative examples as they contain such clearly extreme or inappropriate measures that they make a useful basis for contrast as we proceed through this discussion.

Both Caligula and Domitian suffer from hairloss. Caligula's hair is thin (*Cal.* 50.1), and later in life, Domitian became bald (*Dom.* 18.1). Both emperors are sensitive about their condition and behave in such a manner as to prevent any criticism of their condition. Caligula made it a capital offense to view him from a higher place (and so view his hair).[160] Domitian, for his part, 'was so sensitive about his baldness that he took it personally if anyone else was hassled for his baldness, either jokingly or in all seriousness'.[161] Caligula's solution effectively removes any criticism of his condition by threatening any would-be critics with death. While Domitian does not exhibit the menace of Caligula—not that Domitian was a stranger to ordering executions (*Dom.* 10-11, 15.1)—his response highlights the general problem with both emperors' solutions to their problem. Neither acts to correct his condition, but responds to it by controlling other people. Though the Romans lacked modern medical remedies to thinning hair, the next two examples will demonstrate that Caligula and Domitian had other options available to them.

Like Caligula and Domitian, both Caesar and Otho were sensitive about their thinning hair. According to Suetonius, Caesar 'took the defect of his baldness very badly because it was often subject to the insults of dectractors'.[162] In response to these insults, Caesar 'made a habit of combing his thinning hair forward from the crown of his head' and he took advantage of no privilege granted him by the senate and the

[160] *capillo raro at circa verticem nullo, hirsutus cetera. Quare transeunte eo prospicere ex superiore parte aut omnino quacumque de causa capram nominare, criminosum et exitiale habebatur* (*Cal.* 50.1). Hurley (1993) 179 points out an earlier hint of Caligula's attitude towards his baldness: any time the emperor encountered men with nice hair, *pulchri et comati*, he had their heads shaved (*Cal.* 35.1).
[161] *Calvitio ita offendebatur, ut in contumeliam suam traheret, si cui alii ioco vel iurgio obiectaretur* (*Dom.* 18.2).
[162] *calvitii vero deformitatem iniquissime ferret saepe obtrectatorum iocis obnoxiam expertus* (*Jul.* 45.2).

people 'more happily' than the use of a laurel wreath.[163] As for Otho, he too, was sensitive about his thinning hair, and on account of it, 'wore a wig fitted and attached to his head in such a way that no one could make it out'.[164]

Suetonius, as we have seen, characterizes Caesar's care of his body as 'too meticulous' and presents Otho's portrait as an inquiry into the impression the emperor made in contrast to the death he chose. The vanity that both men's sensitivity and solutions suggest implies that the biographer does not approve of the way they manage their hair. Unlike Caligula and Domitian, however, neither Caesar nor Otho becomes threatening or confrontational in response to their condition. Both adopt better solutions than either Caligula or Domitian without behaving in a way that is necessarily appropriate.

Augustus' treatment of his hair clarifies what is wrong with Caesar's and Otho's responses despite their relative moderation. Augustus was 'so careless' of his hair that 'he would leave the task of cutting it to several barbers at one time'.[165] Not only does Augustus lack any sense of the vanity displayed in the previous examples, but as Suetonius presents him, he exhibits its direct opposite. To preclude any argument that Augustus' negligence was the result of the advantage of healthy hair he enjoyed over others, we can consider Nero and Tiberius.

As with Nero's attire, his hairstyle is part of what makes his grooming habits 'completely shameless'. Suetonius notes that Nero 'always' wore his hair in a 'crimped' style, and even grew it long during his trip to Greece.[166] As Bradley has observed, the physical evidence indicates that Nero did not start styling hair like this until 64.[167] Not only is Suetonius exaggerating, then, he is emphasizing, and the focus of that emphasis is a hairstyle that is first deliberate, and second, according to Suetonius, 'shameless'. Somewhat like Nero, Tiberius wore his hair long. Suetonius comments on this, saying

---

[163] *Ideoque et deficientem capillum revocare a vertice adsueverat et ex omnibus decretis sibi a senatu populoque honoribus non aliud aut recepit aut usurpavit libentius quam ius laureae coronae perpetuo gestandae* (*Jul*. 45.2).
[164] *galerico capiti propter raritatem capillorum adaptato et adnexo, ut nemo dinosceret* (*Otho* 12.1).
[165] *in capite comendo tam incuriosus, ut raptim compluribus simul tonsoribus operam daret* (*Aug*. 79.1).
[166] *circa cultum habitumque adeo pudendus, ut comam semper in gradus formatam peregrinatione Achaica etiam pone verticem summiserit* (*Nero* 51).
[167] Bradley (1978) 284-285.

that it was so long that 'it even (*etiam*) touched his neck', and explains that it was a 'family practice'.[168] In the *Annals*, Tacitus comments that Tiberius lost his hair later in life.[169] Suetonius omits this fact though, as we have already seen, he is clearly capable of commenting on baldness and thin hair. His emphasis is therefore likely on the unusual length of Tiberius' hair and the deliberate choice that the emulation of this particular family trait required.

Just as with their clothing, the appearance of the emperors' hair is ultimately up to them. Even when they cannot hope to control or prevent hairloss, they can at least control how they respond to their condition. Caligula and Domitian fail on this count. Their solution is to control those around them and essentially reveals them as the autocrats they are not supposed to be. The criticism that goads their reactions underlies Caesar's, and to some extent, Otho's responses to their condition. Suetonius does not fault either man's sensitivity as such, but rather the decisions they make as a result of that sensitivity. So, too, with the biographer's assessment of Nero and Tiberius, even though both emperors (as Suetonius presents them) have full heads of hair. Suetonius expressly judges Nero 'completely shameless' and the historical exaggeration we observed indicates that the biographer's complaint is precisely the style that Nero deliberately adopts. Criticism is less overt in the *Tiberius*, but the difference between the biographer's account and Tacitus' again suggests that Suetonius' focus is on the style that Tiberius has chosen to emulate. Only Augustus and his freely groomed hair come away unscathed. While Suetonius does not suggest that an emperor ought to neglect his appearance entirely, the behavior of the first *princeps* in the context of the other examples we have considered may indicate Suetonius' opinion that an emperor should have better things to worry about than his hair.

---

[168] *capillo pone occipitium summissiore ut cervicem etiam obtegeret, quod gentile in illo videbatur* (*Tib*. 68.2).
[169] *Quippe illi praegracilis et incurva proceritas, nudus capillo vertex, ulcerosa facies ac plerumque medicaminibus interstincta* (Tac. *Ann*. 4.57.2).

The Face

In this section, we shall consider the emperor's facial expression or complexion. As in the previous sections, the focus will be on either what the emperor does to change his expression, or when this is beyond his control, how he handles the natural appearance of his face. I will compare and contrast the first four examples to clarify what is right or wrong with each emperor's response to his appearance, before ending with two examples that do not fit easily in with the previous ones.

Hurley has commented that Suetonius does Caligula no favors in turning him, perhaps the "best-looking" of the Julio-Claudians, into the ugliest member of his family. Caligula's face was 'naturally scary and ugly' and he 'deliberately' made it worse by rehearsing poses in front of a mirror.[170] Though it is unclear that Caligula could have improved the appearance of his face, his attempts to make himself look even more unpleasant are hardly commendable, and seem consistent with the menace that characterize his handling of his thinning hair. Vespasian's expression is also unusual, and is perhaps no more likely than Caligula's to be improved. Vespasian's response, however, is very different. Vespasian's expression, says Suetonius, made him look like he was 'constipated'. When asked to make a joke about Vespasian, a witty courier focused on just that quality, replying that he would tell his joke after the emperor had finished 'easing his bowels'.[171] By deliberately soliciting the joke himself, Vespasian turns potential criticism about his face into a source of humor. This humor creates a situation that, in contrast to Caligula's behavior, involves everyone and harms none.

Unlike Caligula's and Vespasian's, Domitian's expression was 'modest' (*verecundus*). Domitian was 'so aware' of the favorable impression his expression made on people, however, that he once bragged (*iactare*) to the senate about it.[172] As Kaster has observed, *verecundia* is an emotion that works against an individual's "offensive

---

[170] *Vultum vero natura horridum ac taetrum etiam ex industria efferabat componens ad speculum in omnem terrorem ac formidinem* (*Cal*. 50.1).
[171] *vultu veluti nitentis*; *de quo quidam urbanorum non infacete, siquidem petenti, ut et in se aliquid diceret*: *dicam, inquit, cum ventrem exonerare desieris* (*Vesp*. 20).
[172] *Commendari se verecundia oris adeo sentiebat, ut apud senatum sic quondam iactaverit*: *usque adhoc certe et animum meum probastis et vultum* (*Dom*. 18.2).

self-assertion" in the face of events that individual is capable of influencing.[173] Domitian's boast is proof that he was not in fact *verecundus*, and indicates his failure to manage his blessings properly. Augustus' expression was similarly pleasing. It was 'so calm and peaceful', says Suetonius, that it once changed the mind of a Gaul, who intended to push the emperor off a cliff.[174] In contrast to Domitian, however, Augustus takes no action or makes no statement with regard to his expression. Nor should he. Though it may be a cliché, it is altogether appropriate to say that Augustus lets his face 'speak for itself' where Domitian feels the need to advertise his own (supposed) merits.

Otho's portrait, as we have already seen, is the basis for Suetonius' examination of the contrast between the impression the emperor's appearance made and his self-inflicted death. As one of the examples of Otho's 'almost feminine neatness', Suetonius adduces the emperor's practice of 'even rubbing his face with moist bread every day, from his first growth of facial hair so he would never have a beard'.[175] As with the management of his clothing and hair, Otho's facials are mostly harmless. He is not threatening, but merely and 'nearly feminine'. The latter trait is of course enough to attract Suetonius' attention and disapproval ('even'; *quin et*), and is a clear sign of Otho's deliberate manipulation of his body.

Vitellius represents a different sort of case. Suetonius does not comment on his expression, nor does he provide any indication of aesthetics. He does not say that Vitellius was ugly, handsome, or even feminine. Instead, he observes that Vitellius' face was 'normally red as a result of heavy drinking'.[176] Though Vitellius, like Caligula, acts in a way that changes his appearance, Vitellius' problem is physiological. His appearance reveals his vices, and Suetonius calls attention to the vice that causes Vitellius' flush rather than the flush itself. It should be noted that Suetonius presents Vitellius' portrait in the context of his capture and procession down the Via Sacra to

---

[173] Kaster (2005) 18 and 61-65.
[174] *Vultu erat vel in sermone vel tacitus adeo tranquillo serenoque, ut quidem e primoribus Galliarum confessus sit inter suos, eo se inhibitum ac remollitum, quo minus, ut destinarat, in transitu Alpium per simulationem conloquii propius admissus in praecipitium propelleret* (*Aug*. 79.1).
[175] *munditiarum vero paene muliebrium…quin et faciem cotidie rasitare ac pane mandido linere consuetum, idque instituisse a prima lanugine, ne barbatus umquam esset* (*Otho* 12.1).
[176] *facies rubida plerumque ex vinolentia* (*Vit*. 17.2).

the accompaniment of a jeering mob that 'reproaches his physical defects'.[177] In this case, Suetonius need not render the judgment that his account provides for him.

In all the above instances save the *Augustus*, the emperor's will is evident to a greater or less degree. Augustus' lack of action, however, is commendable in contrast to the equally blessed Domitian, who effectively demonstrates what not to do with one's gifts. Both emperors, moreover, highlight the general question that Suetonius answers in describing his subjects' faces. It is a question of management. An emperor may be ugly, or at least, unusual in appearance. He may even be good-looking. But aesthetic qualities are not sufficient to warrant praise or blame. What matters is how the emperor responds to his appearance or—as most clearly exemplified by Vitellius—how he got to look as he does in the first place. In the next section, we shall pursue a more direct line of inquiry, and consider the simple question of defect and remedy.

Legs

This section is somewhat unusual in that it relies on the portrait of someone who is not emperor. As we noted in the previous chapter, Suetonius begins the *Caligula* with an account of the emperor's father Germanicus. In this mini-biography of Germanicus, Suetonius includes a physical description and Germanicus provides the paradigm from which to understand what the biographer says about other emperors' legs. The factors that lead Suetonius to criticize the emperors' legs will, moreover, lead our discussion to a more general examination of the physical descriptions. According to Suetonius, Germanicus' legs were too skinny for the rest of his body. They were not 'congruent' with the rest of his form. Germanicus corrected the blemish, however, by 'diligent horse-riding after dining'.[178] Germanicus' deliberate correction of his problem is apparent enough, and the following examples will be equally straightforward for their absence of any attempt at self-improvement.

---

[177] *quidbusdam stercore et caeno incessentibus, aliis incendiarum et patinarium vociferantibus, parte vulgi etiam corporis vitia exprobrante* (*Vit*. 17.2).
[178] *Formae minus congruebat gracilitas crurum, sed ea quoque paulatim repleta assidua equi vectatione post cibum* (*Cal*. 3.1).

Like his father, Caligula had legs that did not match well with the size of his body. In contrast to his 'very large' body, Caligula had 'very skinny' legs.[179] Nero, too, had skinny legs that jarred with his thick neck and large belly.[180] And, finally, Domitian had thin legs, though Suetonius concedes that they 'they had become thin because of a long illness'.[181] In all three instances, the emperor makes no attempt to correct the thinness of his legs in any way. The lack of action is clear after the example of Germanicus, and Suetonius' disapproval is likewise readily understood.

What may not be clear, however, is why Suetonius disapproves. That is to say, it may not be clear why he thinks thin legs are a problem in need of correction. He does not, after all, directly attribute any particular vice to the emperors' thin legs, nor does he imply any sort of underlying physiological interaction in the manner of Vitellius' drinking and complexion. In all four of the instances noted above, however, Suetonius' includes his subjects' legs as part of a contrast with other parts of their bodies. Germanicus and Caligula's legs were too thin for the size of their bodies. Nero's legs stand out against the thickness of his neck and the prominence of his belly, and Domitian's legs undermine the 'good-looks and elegance' he enjoyed as a youth.[182] In short, thin legs detract from their owner's physical symmetry, and in the next section we shall examine several portraits that focus on this issue.

Symmetry

Physical symmetry arises notably in the portraits of Augustus and his successor Tiberius. The example of Germanicus's legs demonstrates that incongruous features that might contribute to an 'imbalanced' appearance can, at times, be corrected or at least managed. Height, for example, is not necessarily something that an emperor can be expected to change significantly. As we shall below, an emperor does have some

[179] *Statura fuit eminenti, colore expallido, corpore enormi, gracilitate maxima cervicis* et *crurum* (*Cal*. 50.1).
[180] *Statura fuit prope iusta, corpore maculoso et fetido, subflavo capillo, vultu pulchro magins quam venusto, oculis caesis et hebetioribus, cervice obesa, ventre proiecto, gracillimis cruribus, valitudine prospera* (*Nero* 51).
[181] *postea calvitio quoque deformis et obesitate ventris et crurum gracilitate, quae tamen ei valitudine longa remacruerant* (*Dom*. 18.1).
[182] *praeterea pulcher ac decens, maxime in iuventa* (*Dom*. 18.1).

options in this regard, but the issue of height raises the point that there are nonetheless limits to the degree to which an emperor can control or influence his appearance. As with the facial expressions of Augustus and Domitian, however, the question to be asked is how the emperor manages his particular physical endowments.

Augustus, according to Suetonius, was physically 'proportional and uniform throughout his limbs'. This physical symmetry concealed the fact that, in Suetonius' judgment, Augustus was short (*statura brevis*) and produced a situation in which a person would only notice Augustus' stature if the emperor happened to be standing next to someone taller.[183] Earlier in the *Life*, Suetonius notes that Augustus wore shoes that made him 'appear taller than he was' and this perhaps suggests the emperor's sensitivity about his height.[184] Though Suetonius is not explicit on the matter, and there is little need to take the issue to absurd lengths, whatever the effect Augustus' shoes had on his height, they seem not to have made him look actually tall. Nor, and more importantly, did they so alter Augustus' appearance as to detract from his natural symmetry and to make him appear gawkish. As with his facial expression, Augustus' management of his appearance observes appropriate limits.

Like Augustus, Tiberius was symmetrical. He was 'uniform and even in his limbs all the way down to his feet'. Unlike Augustus, Tiberius was tall. He was also broad-shouldered and broad–chested, and had a big strong body.[185] This description seems positive. It is also, however, a 'still-life' and it is worth examining what happens to Tiberius' body when he uses it. Even when in the presence of his associates, Tiberius walked with 'a stiff and bent neck, a hard expression on his face, and usually in silence; when he did speak, he did so with a strange, soft movement of his fingers'.[186] Whatever the merits of Tiberius' appearance, his physical mannerisms annoyed his contemporaries, who took his comportment as 'unpleasing and full of arrogance'.

---

[183] *staturam brevem—quam tamen Iulius Marathus libertus etiam memoriam eius quinque pedum et dodrantis fuisse tradit—sed quae commoditate et aequitate membrorum occuleretur, ut non nisi ex comparatione astantis alicuius procerioris intellegi posset* (*Aug*. 79.2).
[184] *calciamentis altiusculis, ut procerior quam erat videretur* (*Aug*. 73).
[185] *Corpore fuit amplo atque robusto, statura quae iustam excederet*; *latus ab umeris et pectore, ceteris quoque membris usque ad imos pedes aequalis et congruens* (*Tib*. 68.1).
[186] *Incedebat cervice rigida et obstipa, adducto fere vultu, plerumque tacitus, nullo aut rarissimo etiam cum proximis sermone eoque tardissimo, nec sine molli quadam digitorum gesticulatione* (*Tib*. 68.3).

Augustus himself noticed this and, as we have already seen, tried often (*temptare saepe*) to excuse his successor's behavior as 'faults of nature' rather than deliberate 'faults of will'.[187] That no one believed this is implied by the fact that Augustus tried this excuse on more than one occasion. People believed, in other words, that Tiberius was doing these things deliberately. Whether their assessment is correct or not, that the reason for their complaints was the belief that Tiberius behaved objectionably on purpose is consistent with the argument I have pursued throughout this chapter. Like Augustus, Tiberius was symmetrical. Unlike Augustus, however, Tiberius did not take advantage of this and disrupted the natural harmony of his appearance.

Claudius represents the last example of this section. We shall not speak of symmetry specifically in this instance, but like Suetonius, of the general impression Claudius' appearance made on people. Claudius was tall and full-bodied. He had a handsome neck and pleasing white hair. These traits, says Suetonius, gave Claudius' form an air of 'authority and dignity' when he was sitting or at rest.[188] For somewhat like Tiberius, this authority and dignity lasted only as long as the emperor's inertia. Claudius had difficulty walking, owing to his weak knees, and his head twitched at the least movement. This twitching was matched by a stutter that added to the spectacle of Claudius' unpleasant laughter and disgusting (salivating and sniveling) anger.[189]

The diagnosis of modern scholarship has been that Claudius likely suffered from cerebral palsy.[190] Suetonius and his audience, not to mention Claudius' contemporaries, did not of course have the benefit of modern medicine. For them, as Hurley observes, Claudius' flaws were curable.[191] We can point directly, moreover, to Claudius' anger and its effect on his carriage. Claudius, according to Suetonius, was 'conscious of his wrath and angry disposition', but instead of doing anything about them, issued an edict in

---

[187] *Quae omnia ingrata atque arrogantiae plena et animadvertit Augustus in eo et excusare temptavit saepe apud senatum ac populum professus naturae vitia esse, non animi* (*Aug*. 68.3).
[188] *Auctoritas dignitasque formae non defuit et veterum stanti vel sedenti ac praecipue quiescenti, nam et prolixo nec corpore erat et specie canitieque pulchra, opimis cervicibus* (*Claud*. 30).
[189] *Ceterum et ingredientem destituebat poplites minus firmi, et remisse quid vel serio agentem multa dehonestabant*: *rirus indecens, ira turpior spumante rictu, umentibus naribus, praeterea linguae titubantia caputque cum semper tum in quantulocumque actu vel maxime tremulum* (*Claud*. 30).
[190] See Hurley (2001) 200; Leon (1948) 79-86; Levick (1990) 13-15; Martin (1989) 149-162.
[191] Hurley (2001) 200.

which he excused and rationalized them.[192] Despite the positive impression his appearance made, then, Claudius' problem is that he does not properly control his quirks or even attempt to mitigate those things like anger that both detract from his appearance and of which he is aware.

Of all the features discussed so far, symmetry might seem the most likely to stray into the realm of physiognomy. The 'authority and dignity' of Claudius' appearance would be especially appropriate in this regard. Authority and dignity are not, however, necessarily character traits that physiognomy seeks, and the fact that both Claudius and Tiberius undermine the positive impression their appearance creates by their mannerisms indicates that Suetonius' concern is their appearance in the context of their behavior. The *Tiberius* makes this point explicit in the contemporary rejection of the excuse that Tiberius' quirks were not 'faults of his will'. Augustus again serves as the example of model behavior and moderation. The first *princeps* cannot necessarily be given credit for a natural symmetry, but his management (or, at least, preservation) gains merit in contrast to Tiberius and Claudius. In the next section, we shall consider several portraits that rely on the general impression they create without necessarily calling attention to any particular relationship between the emperor's appearance and his behavior.

Height, Age, and Good Looks

This section will generally focus on physical features that the emperor cannot reasonably be expected to control. While Augustus may have been able to create an illusion of greater height, there is only so much a very tall emperor could have done to make himself less conspicuous. Caligula, for example, was very tall (*statura fuit eminenti*; *Cal*. 50.1). We have already commented on Caligula's gaudy and strange choice of attire, and the emperor's great height would have increased the impact of his clothing. Caligula thus provides an example of how not to respond or to manage one's height. To

[192] *Irae atque iracundiae conscius sibi, utramque excusavit edicto distinxitque* (*Claud*. 38.1).

set the tone of this section, I will start with the *Vitellius* before moving on to the *Galba* and the *Titus*. In the last example, we shall almost leave physical features behind altogether, and instead concentrate on the impression Titus' portrait leaves.

As we have already observed, the flush of Vitellius' face betrayed his heavy drinking, and the size of his belly similarly reflects his gluttony (*venter obesus*; *Vit*. 17.2).[193] Vitellius was also very tall (*enormis proceritas*; *Vit*. 17.2), and this feature would likely have increased the visibility of his ruddy face for the jeering mob that attended his march down the Via Sacra. Suetonius also mentions that Vitellius' head was 'held back by his hair' and the 'point of a sword was shoved under his chin so he could not look down and shield his face from view'.[194] Not only his height, then, but also the actions of Vitellius' captors increased the visibility of his face, as Suetonius himself makes clear.

It is also possible that Vitellius' obese belly took on greater prominence during this procession. The emperor was led down the street with 'his hands bound behind his back, a noose thrown about his neck, and was half-naked with his clothing torn apart'.[195] The awkward physical position to which Vitellius is subjected—particularly aggravated by the point of the sword—might have caused the emperor to lean backwards, and his tattered clothing might easily have revealed the belly that was already thrust forward. At any rate, Vitellius' portrait is set in a context that highlights at least one of his blemishes. Though Vitellius' height is not necessarily a fault or something that he mismanages, it contributes to the 'scene' Suetonius is creating by increasing Vitellius' visibility.

Galba's portrait similarly creates a general image or impression, but is less critical of any specific feature. Galba's portrait is that of an elderly man. He has lost his hair and is 'very bald'. His hands and feet are so disfigured by arthritis that he cannot 'wear shoes for too long or properly handle reading material'. These disabilities are

---

[193] For Vitellius' extravagance and gluttony, see: *Vit*. 7.1. 7.3, 8.2, 12, esp. 13, 15.1, 15.3, 16, and 17.2.
[194] *reducto coma capite, ceu noxii solent, atque etiam mento mucrone gladii subrecto, ut visendam praeberet faciem never summitteret* (*Vit*. 17.1).
[195] *donec religatis post terga manibus, iniecto cervicibus laqueo, veste discissa seminudus in forum tractus est inter magna rerum verborumque ludibria per totum viae Sacrae spatium*, (*Vit*. 17.1).

compounded by an odd condition afflicting his right flank. The skin has grown out and begun to hang down in such a way that it requires binding up with some sort of device presumably worn under his clothing.[196]

Galba cannot reasonably be blamed for the effects of aging his physique exhibits. He even takes appropriate measures to conceal the odd overhang of skin that afflicts him. Immediately after this aged portrait, however, Suetonius relates Galba's gluttony and sexual excess—Galba's response to Nero's death, for example, is an assignation with his favorite Icelus—and the sequence from portrait to vices creates the impression that Galba is not 'feeling' his age in a suitable manner.[197] The age and decrepitude expressed by Galba's portrait ought to preclude the vices that follow it in the way that Augustus' ill health led him to adopt a particular winter wardrobe.[198] Suetonius' emphasis is thus not on Galba's behavior as it effects his body, but on how the impression Galba's appearance creates ought to effect his behavior.[199]

Titus' portrait is perhaps the most impressionistic of the *Caesares*, and is almost certainly the least informative of them on the question of appearance. Suetonius starts Titus' portrait with the comment that Titus' 'physical and mental gifts became immediately apparent during his childhood, and increased with age'.[200] The physical details that immediately follow, however, are generally not visually specific. Titus had a 'handsome form, in which there was no less authority than grace' and also possessed 'unusual strength'.[201]

While 'handsome' conveys a sense of judgment, it does not describe any specific feature, and Titus' authority and grace are likewise vague. They provide a sense of the

---

[196] *Statura fuit iusta, capite praecalvo, oculis caeruleis, adunco naso, manibus pedibusque articulari morbo distortissimis, ut neque calceum perpeti nec libellos evolvere aut tenere omnino valeret. Excreverat etiam in dexteriore latere eius caro praependebatque adeo ut aegre fascia substringeretur* (*Galba* 21).

[197] *Cibi plurimi traditur, quem tempore hiberno etiam ante lucem capere consuerat, inter cenam vero usque eo abundanti<s>, ut congestas super manus reliquias circumferri iuberet spargique ad pedes stantibus. Libidinis mares pronior et eos non nisi praeduros exoletosque; ferebant in Hispania Icelum e veteribus concubinis de Neronis exitu nuntiantem non modo artissimis osculis palam exceptum ab eo, sed ut sine mora velleretur oratum atque seductum* (*Galba* 22).

[198] Cf., Cicero *de Sen*. 34-65, esp. 36 and 44.

[199] Morgan (2004) 320-323 provides a more full argument for Suetonius' disapproval of Galba's sexual behavior in the context of his age.

[200] *In puero statim corporis animique dotes explenduerunt, magisque ac magis deinceps per aetatis gradus* (*Tit.* 3.1).

[201] *forma egregia et cui non minus auctoritatis inesset quam gratiae, praecipuum robur, quanquam neque procera statura et ventre paulo proiectiore* (*Tit.* 3.1).

impression Titus' appearance made on people, but do not indicate what the emperor actually looked like. Suetonius reports only two specific details about Titus' physique. The emperor was 'not tall and had a bit of a paunch'. Suetonius reports these features in contrast to the overall impression Titus' appearance made on people. Titus was handsome and so on, even though he was not tall and had a potbelly. Titus' handsomeness, authority, grace, and strength are, in other words, his 'physical gifts'. Suetonius' inclusion and quick dismissal of Titus' stature and paunch reflect the fact that the biographer will not concentrate on Titus' physical features as such in this portrait. Titus' physical gifts are such that they are not, evidently, limited to any particular features.

Suetonius next describes Titus' mental gifts. Blessed with an extraordinary memory, for example, Titus was capable with both arms and horses as a result of his 'teachability'.[202] Mooney has observed that Titus' abilities would doubtless have seemed exceptional.[203] Taking things one step further, Garuti has noted that the memory and teachability Suetonius associates with Titus were taken by philosophers, educators, and orators as prerequisites for instruction.[204] This paves the way for progress through learning and practice, and Suetonius has already noted that Titus' physical and mental gifts became more apparent as he aged. Though Titus' portrait is not 'physical' to the degree of the other Caesars', Suetonius' focus in it remains fundamentally unchanged. It is not only that Titus was blessed, but that he managed his gifts in such a way that he improved over time. Suetonius' inclusion of Titus' mental gifts alongside the physical—essentially bringing the two together—may even be read as the biographer's implicit acknowledgment of the argument I am making. Unlike Domitian, Titus does not use his pleasing appearance as an opportunity for self-aggrandizement. On the contrary, he behaves in such a way that his few physical blemishes cannot detract from the positive overall impression he makes.

---

[202] *memoria*[*e*] *singularis, docilitas ad omnis fere tum belli tum pacis artes* (*Tit*. 3.1).
[203] Mooney (1930) 471 compares Suetonius' Titus to Velleius' Scipio Aemilianus: *omnibus belli ac togae dotibus ingenique ac studiorum eminentissimus saeculi sui* (Vel. Pat. 1.12).
[204] Garuti (1983) 308ff. extends this intellectual malleability to a general *comitas*. Suetonius himself says nothing of this particular quality here, but it may lurk in later sections of the *Life* (*e.g*., *Tit*. 8).

Vitellius' height adds to the spectacle of his final moments by literally raising the visibility of another of his physical features. Galba's portrait, on the other hand, presents the inevitable effects of time on his body to establish boundaries for his behavior. And Titus' portrait nearly abandons physical specifics altogether. Vitellius and Galba cannot necessarily be held responsible for their height or age. In this sense, they are 'props' for the presentations, as I have argued them above, that Suetonius is making. They are, in a way, almost not physical. The *Titus* completes this sequence by practically eliminating physical features to focus on what is done with the body rather than on what it looks like. Suetonius' ability to record physical features without directly attaching importance to them, however, might resurrect physiognomic considerations. Perhaps, for example, the fact that my interpretation of the *Galba* goes beyond the portrait itself indicates that the absence of the factors I have been arguing for throughout this chapter are not applicable to the elderly emperor's portrait. Suetonius may intend another interpretation, perhaps physiognomic. So before moving on to my concluding remarks, let me briefly revisit the problems raised by the physiognomic interpretation of the *Caesares*.

The Physiognomy of the *Caesares* (Again)

My examination of the portraits throughout this discussion has not been exhaustive. Numerous individual features that Suetonius reports for some of the emperors have been omitted for the reason that they do not readily conform to the interpretation for which I have been arguing. Eye color, for example, might be mutable with the modern contact lens, but Rome's emperors obviously did not have such options.

Caesar had dark eyes, Nero's were a bluish grey, and Galba had blue eyes.[205] For Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, and Domitian, Suetonius reports on the size or clarity of

[205] *nigris vegetisque oculis* (*Jul.* 45.1); *oculis caesis et hebetioribus* (*Nero* 51); *oculis caeruleis* (*Galba* 21).

the emperors' eyes, but not their color.[206] And for the remaining five *Lives*, Suetonius reports nothing about the emperors' eyes. It may be possible that Suetonius intends for the eyes he mentions to be interpreted physiognomically, but then the question becomes why some eyes are physiognomically significant and others are not.

Unique features like Caesar's mouth (*Jul.* 45.1) or Augustus' teeth (*Aug.* 79.2) might also seem to have physiognomic significance precisely because of their uniqueness. This uniqueness, however, raises an additional question. If Suetonius intends certain features—be they unusual or not—to be interpreted physiognomically, the question becomes how the reader is to know when to turn physiognomy 'on' or 'off'. How, that is, is the reader to know that one feature is physiognomical and another is not. Not only, then, must Suetonius be a well-informed physiognomist, so too apparently must his ideal reader. There still remains, moreover, the problem of detail that I noted at the beginning of this discussion. After identifying the physiognomic features, one might then be required to supply a missing detail here or there in order to arrive at a satisfactory interpretation, not to mention the question of why Suetonius left those details out in the first place. At some point, the management of this process becomes absurd for both Suetonius and his reader, and once again serious doubt is cast on the utility of a physiognomic interpretation.

The prominence of the emperors in the *Caesares* does not always go without saying. On the question of the portraits, in particular, scholarly attention has tended to focus on the wrong individual. That is to say, on Suetonius and his alleged physiognomic beliefs rather than on the emperor and his acts. The emperor, it must be emphasized, is the subject of both the *Life* and the portrait. My discussion has concentrated throughout on the emperors' behavior in relation to their bodies, not on the bodies themselves. An approach like physiognomy, which understands appearance as a direct index of character, attempts to predict behavior. Again, Suetonius is interested in what the emperors do, not what they are likely to do.

[206] *Aug*. 79.2; *Tib*. 68.2; *Cal*. 50.1; *Dom*. 18.1.

In speaking of the *verecundia* of Domitian's expression, I made passing reference to Kaster's definition of *verecundia*: it is an emotion that works against the individual's "offensive self-assertion" in the face of events that individual is capable of influencing.[207] As emperor, Suetonius' subjects are able (or expected) to influence or control any situation in which the biographer places them. Kaster's definition of the emotion, however, is other-oriented. His cognitive 'script' involves a calculus of estimation that moves in the direction from self to other (and back again): if I do this—and whether or not I do it is up to me—what might it tell the other person about what I think of them and of their position relative to me. As Kaster also observes, it is a characteristic of the *civilis princeps* to be *verecundus.*[208] For only a *civilis princeps* would take the trouble to worry about, or even recognize, social standing in the case of a simple *civis.*[209] We can say, then, that physical appearance, insofar as it can be influenced by conscious decisions, matters as the public face that is put forward as an indication of what the emperor thinks about his audience or subjects and their opinion of him. It is a sign of his attitude. To use a term a Roman reader would have immediately understood, it is a sign of the emperor's sense of *decorum.*

A brief recapitulation may clarify what I have in mind. Caesar's distress over his baldness is the result of the insults leveled by others against his condition. His attempts to conceal his thinning hair are therefore an indication that their opinion about him matters to him. Caligula's solution to the same problem, on the other hand, effectively renders it impossible for others even to have an opinion about his baldness. In making it illegal for anyone to view him from above, Caligula behaves like the autocrat he is not supposed to be. He puts other people in their place and makes clear his lack of respect for them. By contrast, Augustus' tolerance for the company of people taller than himself may be taken as a sign of his recognition that social interaction—even, or perhaps, especially, if one is *princeps*—need not be a zero-sum

[207] Kaster (2005) 18 and 61-65.
[208] Kaster (2005) 24. 158n.37.
[209] One might prefer the negative example of *inverecundia,* as exhibited by Caligula. Not content merely to ignore his grandmother Antonia when she attempted to give him some advice, Caligula handed out some of his own, reminding her that he could do anything he wanted to anyone (*Cal.* 29.1).

game in which your blessing is always another's curse. While the use of lifts to elevate himself reflects his sensitivity about his height, it also observes, and maintains, social protocol in two ways. First, like Caesar's treatment of his baldness, it indicates implicitly respect for the opinion of others. Second, it corrects Augustus' personal problem without invading or restricting the space of others.

This is a question of decorum for practical ends that intertwine the personal and the social. Augustus' behavior reacts to his physical shortcomings—an implicit acknowledgement of his subjects' predilections—but it does no harm on the individual or social or cultural level. In Suetonius' own day, for example, the emperor Hadrian took to wearing a beard in order to conceal a facial scar. Though the practice had been unusual previously, Hadrian's adoption of it prompted a fashion trend. While it is perhaps difficult to gauge the biographer's opinion of Hadrian's beard,[210] one concern about Nero's slovenly appearance—with or without a beard—might be the potential influence of imperial fashion on the individuals of the general population.[211] Though some may have taken offense at his appearance, others may have chosen to emulate it. But widespread imitation of an unacceptable practice is no improvement; it may even make things worse in the mind of the Roman aristocrat whose sense of *decorum* it offends (especially if it proves to be a fad).

The practicality of Suetonius' approach can thus run deeper than mere fashion sense and it is worth considering whether it can extend beyond the isolated realm of the body. The visible features of the temper Claudius habitually loses, for example, lower his 'face' in several important ways. No Roman who saw him angry—twitchy, drooling, and running at the nose—could have respected him, especially when Claudius himself was *conscius* of his tendency towards anger.[212] It would not have inspired much confidence in the *princeps*' ability to do his job.[213] Claudius' failure to address any of these issues might finally be interpreted as a fundamental disregard for those around

[210] Suetonius might have approved of the beard as a corrective measure, but not, say, as a Greek mannerism.
[211] As does, for that matter, Augustus' refusal to put on airs.
[212] *Claud*. 30 and 38.
[213] Note, moreover, that Suetonius devotes a rubric to the detrimental effect Claudius' anger had on his reign, *Claud*. 38.

him. The result is the loss of any claim to the authority and dignity the biographer assigns Claudius' form, both of which qualities are required of an effective *princeps*. When Vespasian, on the other hand, submits his literal face for comment, it demonstrates his understanding of his own position. There is no restriction on *libertas*, and the biographer duly treats Vespasian's *comitas*, his willingness to make himself available to others.

It should be clear from what I have said already that my discussion is shifting from the emperor's management of his body to his management of the state as a function of his decisions. This should perhaps not be surprising in the context of the arguments I have been making both in this chapter and the preceding one. If Suetonius uses the emperor's genealogy to present the *princeps* as 'his own man', and if he treats the emperor's body from the perspective of what that 'man' does, one might reasonably expect such considerations to appear in other areas of the *Life*. Suetonius' physical descriptions are, on the other hand, but one rubric out of the many that form each of the *Lives*, and it is unwise simply to assume this to be the case. In the next chapter, I will therefore pursue a more mechanical perspective and suggest that Suetonius' emphasis on the emperor and what he does pervades the *Lives* in their entirety as a result of the way in which the biographer structures the biographies.

Chapter 3: *Divisiones* and Rubrics

The image of Suetonius as a compiler is a common one. Wallace-Hadrill offers perhaps the most graphic example: Suetonius the *scholasticus* hunched at his desk, scrupulously assembling the *Caesares* from a set of index cards marked by headings and filled with corresponding examples.[214] For those who favor this image, the result of Suetonius' carefully notated research is frequently a sign of the biographer's objectivity and lack of discrimination.[215] The *Caesares* themselves become little more than the literary demonstration of Suetonius' process of empirical discovery.

The source of this card-index imagery is Suetonius' frequent use of rubrics in the *Caesares*. These rubrics are regarded as the 'building-blocks' of his *Lives* and consist of a general heading that is normally the first word of the rubric—*e.g.*, generosity—followed by examples of that heading—giving to the poor, putting on games, etc. When enough of these rubrics have been strung together, so this holds, the biographer's *Lives* may begin to look like disinterested catalogs or compilations—generosity, clemency, fairness, etc. Several scholars have argued against this conception of the biographer's methods, most notably Benediktson, Gugel, and Lounsbury.[216] Their contributions to an alternative interpretation of Suetonius' use of rubrics are invaluable, but the detail and selective scrutiny of these works also limit their usefulness for the *Caesares* as a whole. Benediktson, for example, does not suggest that the ring-structure he finds in the *Galba*'s rubrics ought to be adopted as a general principle of Suetonian composition.

[214] Wallace-Hadrill (2004 [1983]) 15, takes the idea so seriously that he cautions that we "should pause before assuming that Suetonius actually had at his disposal anything so useful as a card-index. There is no evidence that antiquity had developed such systems," and later dismisses attempts to make the biographer more than an "amasser of facts," 21. See also Macé (1900) 54; Leo (1901) 134; Mooney (1930) 19; Shotter (1993) 9; Hurley (1993) viii and (2001) 18.
[215] See Butler&Cary (1927) viii; Leeman (1963) 361; Shotter (1993) 12; Townend (1967) 92-93; Wallace-Hadrill (2004 [1983]) 25. Hurley (1993) vii-viii focuses more on Suetonius' lack of discrimination. See also Mooney (1930) 17 who comments that Suetonius contributes to our 'knowledge' of the Caesars, but not to our understanding of them.
[216] Benediktson (1997) 167-173; Gugel (1977) esp. 23-73; Lounsbury (1991) 3650-3760.

His study thus enhances our understanding of the *Galba*, but not necessarily of the *Caesares* as a whole.[217]

This chapter accordingly attempts to take a step back from such focused studies and to discuss Suetonius' leading statements, or *divisiones*, that govern his rubrics. For the fact that the *divisiones* are unique to the *Caesares* amongst Suetonius' biographical works—they do not appear in his literary *Lives*—has often been overlooked by scholars attempting to elucidate the dynamics of the rubrics.[218] Examining the *divisiones* that segment the *Lives*, however, will make it possible to discern the organizational scheme behind the rubrics, and thus Suetonius' own views on his subject matter.

It will be necessary to begin with a general discussion of the *divisio* in Suetonius. The *divisio*'s basic mechanics will be the focus of this preliminary examination—in essence, this will be a refinement of the 'card-index' approach to the biographer—but also, and more importantly, we shall establish that Suetonius' *divisio* is more than a reference system or index to his rubrics. The traditional definition of the term *divisio* in Suetonius, in other words, will be shown to be too limited for the ways in which the biographer uses the device. For the sake of convenience, and to maintain a degree of continuity with previous scholarship, however, I will continue to use the term, but supply an additional description to indicate what I think the *divisio* is doing (*e.g.*, transitional *divisio*). Detailed discussion will follow this preliminary examination, and will be divided between close examinations of both the *divisiones* and the rubrics to reinforce what has been said. I will pause briefly between *divisio* and rubric to consider the case of Valerius Maximus, an author almost as well known for his rubrics as Suetonius. Valerius' 'prefaces'—which I will suggest are akin to Suetonius' *divisiones*—are not to be overlooked in this account. For developing a sense of Valerius' use of prefaces and rubrics will serve as a helpful comparandum for Suetonius' practices. A return to the *divisio* will complete our discussion and bring the preceding sections together.

---

[217] Note, moreover, that Benediktson attributes this arrangement to the prominent rôle played by fate in the *Galba*. Fate is equally, if not more, important to the *Vitellius*, yet Benediktson (rightly) makes no attempt to suggest a similar ring-structure for the *Life*; cf., Veninini (1977).

[218] See Townend (1967) 86.

In the previous chapters, I have argued that Suetonius presents the emperor as a responsible agent capable of making decisions in both the genealogies and the physical descriptions. This chapter will extend that argument, but adopt the mechanical approach I have outlined above to show that the supposed 'objectivity' of Suetonius' rubrics is in fact the result of judgments expressed in the *divisiones*. For while the emperor is generally responsible for everything that happens in the rubrics, Suetonius explicitly comments on this responsibility most frequently in the *divisiones.* It is only when one overlooks the *divisiones*, as much previous scholarship has, that the rubrics can be made to appear an objective compilation.

What's in a *divisio*

Townend defines the *divisio* as "the announcement of topics to be dealt with in order, followed by sections on the said topics."[219] Following Townend's own example, we can look to the *Nero*. Roughly midway through his account of Nero's vices, Suetonius says that the emperor 'at first demonstrated his impudence, lust, extravagance, greed, and cruelty only gradually and in secret, and as if they were the faults of his youth, but they were such that no one even then doubted that they were vices of his nature'.[220] The organizational purpose of the *divisio* becomes clear (to us) when Suetonius covers Nero's impudence, lust, extravagance, greed, and cruelty in precisely the order he presents them in the *divisio* (*Nero* 26-38). While Townend's organizational *divisio* is a useful introduction to the device, however, it also has certain limitations.

As the *divisio* from the *Nero* demonstrates, Suetonius will sometimes introduce several topics at once—in this case, the emperor's impudence, lust, extravagance, greed, and cruelty. The biographer may then cover that material over a large expanse

[219] Townend (1967) 84.
[220] *Petulantiam, libidinem, luxuriam, avaritiam, crudelitatem sensim quidem primo et occulte et velut iuvenili errore exercuit, sed ut tunc quoque dubium nemini foret naturae illa vitia, non aetatis esse* (*Nero* 26.1). Note that my translation obscures the word order of Suetonius' text; the vices start the *divisio* as a clear 'announcement' of the material that will follow.

of text (*Nero* 26-38). But, as Townend observes, this can happen without "reference to each quality at the beginning of its own section."[221] Suetonius does not, in other words, always mark the rubrics in an obvious fashion (*e.g.*, 'now that I have discussed Nero's impudence, the following are examples of his lust'). Suetonius can be even more obscure than the *Nero* suggests. In the *Caligula*, for example, Suetonius notes that 'the emperor himself attempted to arouse devotion by every sort of popular gesture'.[222] An account that includes Caligula's displays of *pietas*, largesse, and public games then follows (*Cal.* 15-18). While the gist of the *divisio* is clear enough, and it reflects Townend's organizational formulation, Suetonius offers no specifics and his reader is left with only a general sense of what is to come. As Townend recognizes, then, Suetonius' *divisiones* are not always the most useful reference or index to the *Lives* from a strictly organizational perspective.[223] Rather than simply leaving the discussion at this point, however, it worth asking if organization is the only purpose Suetonius has in the *divisiones*, and I will argue that we should expand upon Townend's interpretation in three ways.

First, when Suetonius' *divisio* introduces Nero's (or any emperor's) behavior with such value-laden terms as *petulantia* or *crudelitas*, the terms themselves clearly reflect the biographer's judgment.[224] While Suetonius includes, in Nero's case, the judgment of the people that their emperor's impudence and cruelty were 'vices of his nature', he can be less verbose. In the *Vitellius*, he says that the emperor was 'particularly subject to extravagance and cruelty' without providing any additional commentary as in the *Nero*. Subsequent rubrics will bear out whatever opinion is expressed in any case, but the sequence itself—from *divisio* to rubric—is essentially one from conclusion back to proofs. The reader is essentially asked to agree with whatever

[221] Townend (1967) 85-86.
[222] *Incendebat et ipse studia hominum omni genere popularitatis* (*Cal.* 15.1).
[223] Townend (1967) 85: "Often, indeed, it is extremely difficult, even for the reader with his eye open for this particular feature of arrangement, to decide how the material is intended to be classified."
[224] Cf., Townend (1967) 92-93: Suetonius "never makes up his mind about the true nature of his subject, nor seeks to give a consistent account, even by the simple expedient of recognizing that there could a change for the worse as the result of circumstances. To some extent an initial judgment has determined the selection of anecdotes he makes, as when he virtually ignores the possibility that Nero might have been innocent of setting fire to Rome; but even this tendency is probably to be put down to the specious nature of the more scandalous authorities, who could claim inside information about the wickedness of court life."

estimation of his evidence Suetonius has reached without being privy to the thought-process behind it. Were Suetonius' *divisiones* strictly organizational, in other words, his readers would know (on the occasions when the *divisio* announces specific topics) what rubrics to expect. The significance of those particular rubrics, however, might not be so evident. But by inserting judgment into the *divisiones*, as he does in the case of Nero, Suetonius guides his readers. He indicates not only what is to come, but how it is to be understood. Based on the two examples above, then, I would suggest a variation on Townend's strictly organizational *divisio* that also reflects a certain opinion or judgment.

The judgments in the *divisio* can, moreover, take on such importance that Suetonius almost eliminates their organizational purpose. In both the *Caligula* and the *Nero*, for example, Suetonius enters the *Life* and renders a judgment in a *divisio* that is virtually programmatic. Of Caligula, the biographer says, '[t]hus far we have spoken of a *princeps*; for the remainder [of the *Life*], we must speak of a monster'; similarly, in the *Nero* he says, 'I have brought these acts of Nero together in one place—some without fault, and some even worthy of genuine praise—to distinguish them from his disgraceful and criminal acts'.[225] Both *divisiones* clearly separate the good from the bad in their *Lives* and in that respect accomplish a general organizational goal. The division itself, however, is a broad one. It characterizes everything that has preceded it, and everything that will follow it, but without providing a clear sense of precisely what will follow in the manner of the organizational *divisio* with which I started. The moral sweep of the statements—as well as the sequencing from 'conclusion' to 'proofs'—suggests, then, that Suetonius' emphasis is on the judgment he is making. Everything that is to come will demonstrate vice, and the specific vices will (for the most part) be noted by their own *divisiones*. Again, while Townend's organizational purpose still appears, the scope of the material that the *divisio* covers is so broad, and the judgment

[225] *Hactenus quasi de principe, reliqua ut de monstro narranda sunt* (*Cal.* 22.1); *Haec partim nulla reprehensione, partim etiam non mediocri laude digna in unum contuli, ut secernerem a probris ac sceleribus eius, de quibus dehinc dicam* (*Nero* 19.3).

it renders is so clear, that I would suggest that is better to understand that some of Suetonius' *divisiones* are in fact programmatic.

Finally, there are instances where such judgments are less overt or even absent, and this necessitates my third refinement on Townend's observations. To use the first major *divisio* of the *Caesar* as an example, Suetonius says here that he will cover the dictator's *forma*, *habitus*, *cultus*, *mores*, and *civilia ac bellica studia*.[226] He offers no reason for this beyond the fact that doing so will not be 'irrelevant'. There is not, in other words, a judgment that shapes the reader's consumption, and the *divisio* has all the appearances of Townend's strictly organizational device. The next major *divisio*, however, introduces Caesar's *cetera facta dictaque* in contrast to those covered by the preceding *divisio*.[227] These deeds and words, says the biographer, led to the belief that the dictator had abused his power and been justly slain. To each *divisio* in Suetonius, and in particular to those lacking a clear judgment or opinion, we can add a continuity of thought that recalls the previous *divisio* while also looking ahead to the next. As we shall see below in a more detailed discussion of the *Caesar*, Suetonius generally links his *divisiones*, using the rubrics to bridge the gaps between them. And an organizational *divisio* such as the one from the Caesar, that initially appear to be disinterested or neutral, can in fact tie into a larger project of evaluation that Suetonius conducts throughout multiple *divisiones*.

The Purpose of Suetonius' Organization (a): The Two-Way *Divisio* Rubric←→*Divisio*←→Rubric

Early in the *Augustus*, after completing what he calls a 'summary' (*summa*) of the future *princeps*' life, Suetonius inserts the first major *divisio* of the biography. He will treat the individual parts or phases (*partes*) of Augustus' life by rubric (*per species*), rather than by chronology (*per tempora*). Doing so, he says, will be more convenient

[226] *De qua prius quam dicam, ea quae formam et habitum et cultum et mores, nec minus quae ad civilia ac bellica eius studia pertineant, non alienum erit summatim exponere* (44.4).
[227] *Praegravant tamen cetera facta dictaque eius, ut et abusus dominatione et iure caesus existimetur* (76.1).

both for himself and for his reader. It will facilitate his presentation as well as make it more comprehensible.[228]

Whatever the order in which Suetonius composed the *Caesares*, their presentation is linear, and indications that the biographer intended them to be read in sequence are in evidence (e.g., as we saw in **Chapter 1** in the Claudian and Flavian genealogies).[229] The appearance of the Augustan *divisio* might therefore seem belated. For its explanation of Suetonius' method—precisely why he has chosen to arrange his work *per species*—comes after the biography of Augustus' adoptive father Julius Caesar, in which such a statement might have seemed more timely and appropriate given that the dictator is the first of the *Caesares*. Though it might therefore be tempting to assume that a statement similar to the Augustan *divisio* was lost somewhere in the early, lacunose sections of the *Julius*, it will become clear that such a view is unnecessary.[230] Proceeding with due caution, we can still profitably compare the two *Lives* to get a sense of how Suetonius uses the same device—*divisio*—to resolve different manifestations of the same general problem—whether to meet or to deny the reader's expectations—and extract from these findings a general principle to be applied to the *divisiones*.

However unusually it may have turned out, Caesar's was a republican career whose advancement provided Suetonius with an easy, and familiar, avenue for progression. Following his subject from military tribunate to quaestorship and on to the dictatorship, Suetonius did not signpost what his readers immediately would have recognized.[231] The offices themselves, conveniently and naturally adopting a chronological course, can be both rubric and timeline without requiring segmentation

---

[228] *Proposita vitae eius velut summa parte<s> singillatim neque per tempora sed per species exequar, quo distinctius demonstrari cognoscique possint* (*Aug*. 9.1); see also Carter (1982) 4: "This is the most precise statement anywhere in the *Lives* of Suetonius' general principle of procedure."

[229] Although Bowersock (1969) 119-125 argues that Suetonius composed the sequence Galba-Domitian before the Julio-Claudian *Lives* on the basis of vocabulary and construction, Bradley (1973) 257-263 persuasively refutes these arguments, and concludes that the *Caesares* were likely written in chronological order.

[230] See Carter (1982) 4 and Townend (1967) 84.

[231] *Jul*. 5ff.

by *divisio*.[232] For Caesar's career is clearly marked in the manner of Suetonius' rubrics. Each office begins its respective rubric as the first word or phrase: military tribune (*Jul.* 5), quaestor (*Jul.* 6.1 and 7.1), aedile (*Jul.* 10), praetor (*Jul.* 14.1 and 18.1), and consul (*Jul.* 19.2 and 23.1). The execution of the rubrics is chronological, and Suetonius reports what Caesar during his praetorship, for one, rather than what he did in an official capacity. This seamless blend of *per species* and *per tempora*, in short, freed Suetonius from having to explain himself and his approach early in the *Julius*.[233] A reader might not even notice the *honor*-as-rubric approach because of the 'chronological' advancement that accompanies Caesar's different offices and an organizational *divisio* is unnecessary for this portion of the *Life*.[234]

The material that Suetonius proposes to cover in the subsequent Caesarian *divisio*, however, is not clearly related to the dictator's preceding career. After mentioning Caesar's death and the things he was planning at the time, the biographer comments that 'before I speak of that [death], it will not be irrelevant to go over [Caesar's] *forma*, *habitus*, *cultus*, and *mores* as well as his civil and martial pursuits'.[235] None of the topics Suetonius includes in this *divisio*, however, easily follows either from the things that Caesar was planning at the time of his death, or even from his death

---

[232] This is not to say that are no *divisiones* in the *Divus Julius* prior to the one under discussion, but that those that exist are relatively minor 'sub-*divisiones*,' governing only a small portion of text (e.g., Caesar's motives in instigating civil war, 30.2-30.5). One might not even notice them insofar as they flow with the narrative, rather than interrupting its continuity.

[233] We can observe a similar phenomenon in the *Tiberius*. In this *Life*, Suetonius follows the natural progression of a Roman life, but clearly subdivides it into chronological rubrics. Suetonius treats Tiberius' infancy and childhood for their 'difficulty' and 'trouble' (*infantiam pueritiamque habuit laboriosam et exercitatam*; *Tib*. 6.1) and then uses the assumption of the *toga virilis* as a starting point for the compression of Tiberius' life from youth 'all the way to his principate' (*virili toga sumpta adulescentiam omnem spatium insequentis aetatis usque principatus inter initia per haec fere transegit*; *Tib*. 7.1). Suetonius further divides this compressed account with yet more rubrics: Tiberius' marriages (*Tib*. 7.2-3); his introduction to public life (*civilium officiorum rudimenta*; *Tib*. 8); the beginning of his military career (*stipendia prima*; *Tib*. 9.1-2); and finally, the magistracies he held (*magistratus*; *Tib*. 9.3). Suetonius presents the relevant data chronologically, but the arrangement by rubric is evident from the headings. The presentation of the rubrics along the pattern of a life, however, obscures the *per species* arrangement.

[234] Caesar's marriages provide a useful perspective. Mouchová (1968) 28ff., has observed that Suetonius has two systems for reporting his subject's marriages: (1) to introduce each wife as part of a chronological sequence; or (2) to present the marriages as an individual rubric, perhaps divorced of their proper chronological setting. In the *Julius*, Suetonius adopts the first system, using the rubrics of Caesar's magistracies to fit the women into the narrative at roughly the appropriate time period (6.2, quaestor; 21, consul).

[235] *Talia agentem atque meditantem mors praevenit. de qua prius quam dicam, ea quae ad formam et habitum et cultum et mores, nec minus quae ad civilis et bellica eius studia pertineant, non alienum erit summatim exponere* (*Jul.* 44.4).

itself.[236] Suetonius' execution may appear mechanical, even awkward, but some sort of transitional *divisio* is necessary. For the mere mention of Caesar's death no doubt leads Suetonius' readers to anticipate an account of the assassination. But now that he has covered the familiar ground of Caesar's rise as outlined above, Suetonius alerts his readers that he will not be moving directly to the assassination. The *divisio* thus implicitly acknowledges the expected conclusion to the events that Suetonius has covered and, in that sense, interacts with the material that has preceded it.

The Augustan *divisio* performs the same general function, but in response to different circumstances. Instead of delaying the expected as in the *Julius*, the *divisio* introduces it (albeit indirectly). At the end of his 'summary' of Augustus' life, Suetonius locates the origins of the first *princeps*' political supremacy in the triumvirate, and makes the principate an extension of the process started by the three-man rule. Lost in the rapid pace of Suetonius' 'summary' are the wars that Augustus will fight against Caesar's assassins, as well as against Caesar's former lieutenant Antony.[237] Suetonius' chronological compression, in other words, has led to the omission of events in which Augustus figures too prominently for them not to be mentioned. In the *divisio*, however, Suetonius reveals his intention to abandon chronological arrangement for the bulk of the *Life* in favor of *vitae partes* organized *per species*, of phases arranged by

[236] Note, moreover, the phrase *non alienum* with which Suetonius justifies the *divisio* and its material, *non alienum erit summatim exponere* (44.4). The phrase occurs only once more in the extant Suetonian corpus. Early in the *de Rhet*., Suetonius introduces a brief history of *controversiae* and draws a distinction between *veteres controversiae* based on events of the distant past (*ex historiis*) and those treating recent (*recens*) events from real life (*ex veritate ac re*). He then says that it will not be *alienum* to provide some verbatim examples of them: *ex quibus non alienum fuerit unam et alteram exempli causa ad verbum referre* (25.5). The difficulty is whether *ex quibus* refers to those *controversiae* based on distant events, recent ones, or both. Kaster (1995) 283-286 points out that Suetonius himself indicates that the *controversiae ex historiis* are familiar to his contemporaries *usque adhuc*. The examples that follow are therefore most likely to be drawn solely from the latter category, recent events *ex veritate ac re*. What makes the introduction of the examples *non alienum* is that Suetonius thinks that the specific type may not be as familiar to his readers as the other. The *Julius*, however, lacks a clear point of obscurity in need of explanation. It has, however, often been (critically) observed that Suetonius' position as biographer enables him to cover such topics as he proposes—*forma*, *habitus*, *cultus*, and *mores*—that the lofty position of the historian spurns as unworthy of its rank. If historians generally omitted such information, then Suetonius' readers are likely to have been unfamiliar with all of it when encountering the *Caesares* for the first time. In short, the *divisio* does more than delay the familiar—Caesar's assassination—it deliberately heads into the unfamiliar—Caesar's appearance and so on.

[237] *Atque ab eo tempore exercitibus comparatis primum cum M. Antonio M. que Lepido, deinde tantum cum Antonio per duodecim fere annos, novissime per quattuor et quadraginta solus rem p. tenuit* (*Aug*. 8.3).

category rather than events by time.[238] The wars—not to mention everything else that Suetonius has omitted—are coming, but not in the way one might have expected. A transitional *divisio* is again necessary to explain what may seem an omission in Suetonius' account and we can again observe the interaction between the *divisio* and what has preceded it.[239]

Suetonius' chronological compression in the 'summary' of Augustus' life provides yet another reason for the *divisio*. The swift pace of the *Life* brings Augustus to the heights of political power in a brief expanse of text. Augustus is *princeps* after only eight chapters of the *Life*. Under the principate, and as *princeps*, Augustus and every subsequent Caesar are beyond the 'definition' of the republican magistracies so prominent in the *Julius*. The convenient point of reference these offices provided are no longer applicable and Suetonius must intrude into the *Augustus* much earlier than in the *Julius* in order to alert his reader to the change in his arrangement. The specific circumstances that give rise to the first two major *divisiones* in the *Lives* of (adoptive) father and son are thus notably different: for Caesar, the *divisio* forestalls what is anticipated; for Augustus, the *divisio* introduces it.[240] But the general problem is the same. Suetonius must explain to his readers why he will, or will not, pursue the line of thought he (or, at least, more orthodox accounts such as a historical narrative) has led them to expect. He implicitly acknowledges, moreover, the changes in arrangement necessitated by the different political conditions effecting the lives of his biographical subjects.

While these comments have been restricted to the *Julius* and the *Augustus* as a matter of convenience, their relevance to the remainder of the Imperial *Lives* need not be controversial. The *Vespasian*, for example, mimics the use of offices in the *Julius*, but substitutes the reigns of the Julio-Claudian emperors to advance the early sections of

---

[238] Chronological sequence can, however, play a part in the arrangment of *exempla* beneath a rubric (e.g., the sequence of Augustus' wars, *Aug*. 9.2-26), on which, see below.

[239] The swift pace of the *Augustus* does not, furthermore, permit the 'illusion' of extended narrative under the comfortable guise of chronology as witnessed in the republican career of Julius Caesar. The explanatory statement here in the *Augustus* is therefore altogether necessary.

[240] We might also characterize the situation as a problem of *domi militaeque* (cf., Carter (1982) 98). For Caesar, the *divisio* signals the shift from military to domestic or, more generally, from public to private; for Augustus, Suetonius intends to continue with the public before moving on to the private.

the biography. When, under Nero, Vespasian is chosen to quell the Judaean revolt, Suetonius mentions an omen current at the time predicting that the next ruler of the world would come from that troubled region. Vespasian's accession does not follow immediately. Instead, a transitional *divisio* intrudes. It deals with the intervening Galba, Otho, and Vitellius as *de principatu certantes* in one sentence, and then resumes the thread it has interrupted, formally introducing additional *ostenta* of Vespasian's reign from throughout his life.[241] In addition to the rubric that the statement introduces, we should note that Suetonius' management of chronology also necessitates the *divisio.* For having covered Vespasian's command under Nero, and having mentioned the civil strife precipitated by Galba, Otho, and Vitellius, Suetonius begins the rubric on omens with Vespasian's birth, then moves on to Caligula's reign, before eventually returning to Vespasian's move for the throne. Unlike in the *Julius* and the *Augustus*, then, the 'look back' is thematic (omens) rather than historical, but the connection with its preceding material is plain enough.[242] Again, moreover, we can see that the *divisio* engages with the material on either side of itself.

Townend's organizational divisio thus remains generally intact, but with an added, bipolar quality. In order to assuage or to meet the reader's expectations, the *divisio* must both answer any questions raised by what has preceded and lay out what is to come. This two-way quality of the *divisiones* extends beyond the immediate context of the rubrics they govern and touches the *divisiones* themselves, drawing both them and their *Lives* together into a coherent whole. We shall find, moreover, that the rubrics introduced by the *divisiones* themselves push ahead to the next *divisio* in a continuous narrative that emphasizes the *divisio* as much as (if not, at times, more than) the rubrics.

---

[241] *Post Neronem Galbamque Othone ac Vitellio de principatu certantibus in spem imperii venit iam pridem sibi per haec ostenta conceptam* (5.1).

[242] The *divisio* also signals a break with the method of organization-by-emperor that Suetonius has been using. Having dealt with Vespasian's three immediate predecessors in the *divisio*, Suetonius does not bog the middle of the biography down with their presence; cf., Braithwaite (1927) 32-33 on Suetonius' compression of the three emperors' reigns in the *Vespasian*.

A Case for Comparison:
Valerius Maximus

The previous section has established some preliminary reasons for entertaining the idea that Suetonius' *divisio* merits much more attention than it has received. Naturally, Suetonius' rubrics should not be ignored, but instead of treating them as ends in themselves, we can use them as evidence to understand the *divisiones* that guide them. The *divisio*'s bridging between prior and subsequent text suggests that Suetonius' concern for smooth transition from one area to the next goes beyond simple organization. If Suetonius uses his *divisiones* to link one set of rubrics to another, we have reasonable grounds for asking if he manages his rubrics in a similar fashion or even at all. We can similarly ask if Suetonius presents the individual *exempla* that comprise the rubrics haphazardly or with deliberation.

Owing to the obvious predominance of rubrics in Valerius Maximus, recent scholarly treatment of his *Factorum et Dictorum Memorabilium* (*FDM*) has focused on just that aspect of his work. As we shall see, the technical or mechanical aspects of the two authors, as well as the scholarly interpretation of them, can seem so similar that Suetonian scholars, when reading about Valerius, might even be forgiven for forgetting that the subject is not in fact Suetonius. A brief examination of Valerius' work will therefore afford us a convenient opportunity to compare and contrast its characteristics with those of Suetonius. Without endorsing any particular theoretical orthodoxy or judgment, or attempting to read the one author directly through the other, we can look for signs of 'evolution' as we examine the organizational strategies of the two authors.

The basic design of Valerius' work is a collection of *exempla* beneath a unifying rubric. Valerius demonstrates *patientia*, for example, by relating anecdotes about Mucius' attempt to assassinate the Etruscan king Porsenna and a certain Pompeius, who demonstrated his refusal to betray state secrets by voluntarily burning off his finger (*Val. Max.* 3.3.1-2). Collection should not, however, be understood as indiscriminate compilation. The *exempla*, once gathered, must also be arranged. This

involves the ordering of the individual *exempla* beneath their rubrics as well as the presentation of the rubrics themselves. Scholarly interpretation of Valerius' work has yet to arrive at a consensus. Some claim that Valerius' purpose was exclusively moral while others advocate a rhetorical project. Both approaches invest heavily in Valerius' mechanics, and we can use this common ground to make the moral and rhetorical arguments complementary rather than mutually exclusive before returning our discussion to Suetonius.[243]

The use of *exempla* for moral instruction can be traced back to Homer and a long tradition of the compilation of *exempla* centered around a specific topic, especially moral, can be adduced in both Greek and Latin literature.[244] Valerius himself alludes to such a moral purpose, invoking the emperor Tiberius as the one who fosters the virtues, as well as punishing the vices, that will appear in the *FDM*.[245] The work's form, he says, is functional and designed to spare his audience the inconvenience of the great labor he has supposedly endured in collecting (and arranging) the *exempla*.[246] Valerius expands on the utilitarian quality of the rubrics in the various prefaces scattered throughout the *FDM*.

Valerius seems to attach two particular traits to *exempla*. First is the power of the *exempla* to guide and persuade. In his preface to the rubric on poverty, Valerius states that the benefits of financial difficulty can be better demonstrated by individuals

---

[243] For the rhetorical argument, see Bloomer (1992); for the moral, see Skidmore (1996). Bound up in this debate is the question of Valerius' intended audience. Some have argued that Valerius' work was to be used by declaimers; others have suggested politicoes and lawyers; and still others have supposed the target audience to have been provincials and Italians. For a summary of these issues, see Wardle (1998) 12-15. It is unclear to me why some recent Valerian scholarship has adopted such extreme either/or stances. Skidmore's emphasis on Valerius' 'morality' is a reaction to the rhetorical interpretation of Bloomer, whose interpretations he frequently rejects. Bloomer's position is that Valerius wrote his work as a source book for lawyers, public speakers, and declaimers. While the purpose of this hypothetical audience may at times have been moral, Valerius himself is not pursuing a moral agenda (though he does have a cultural one) and, according to Bloomer (1992) 8-9, "like Seneca Valerius offers not theory but a piece of declamation itself." Wardle (1998) 14, who writes after both Bloomer and Skidmore, states that Skidmore makes a "good case" for Valerius' moral purpose, but does not abandon its utlity for those engaged in serious declamation. This either/or debate is not relevant to our discussion. In what follows, I will cite the relevant scholars when necessary, but will generally avoid reproducing the conflict between the competing interpretations.

[244] See Skidmore (1996); for the Greek tradition, cps. 1 and 5; for the Roman 2 and 6.

[245] *Caesar, invoco, cuius caelesti providentia virtutes, de quibus dicturus sum, benignissime foventur, vitia severissime vindicantur* (I.p*raef*.); cf., Skidmore (1996) 53-54.

[246] *Urbis Romae exterarumque gentium facta simul ac dicta memoratu digna, quae apud alios latius diffusa sunt quam ut breviter cognosci possint, ab illustribus electa auctoribus digerere constitui, ut documenta sumere volentibus longae inquisitionis labor absit* (I.*praef*.); see Skidmore (1996) 31 and Wardle (1998) 13.

(*personae*) than by words (*verba*).[247] If, with Skidmore, one understands the *personae* as a specific type of *exemplum*, Valerius is claiming that a concrete example is more persuasive, or even illustrative, than an abstract principle (*verbum*).[248] In a similar vein, though on a level of a greater specificity, Valerius later explicitly imputes a visual quality to *exempla*. Under the rubric of *pietas*, he relates the story of Pero and her father Myco. The aged man, in sorry state, is nourished at the breast of his own daughter. Valerius comments that the eyes of men cling to and are stunned by the painting (*picta imago*) of this event, and that the same or even greater effect should occur in one's mind when encountering it in exemplary form.[249] This has been interpreted as Valerius' positioning of *exempla* as "word-pictures" intended to rival visual representations in "vividness and verisimilitude." Their purpose is the facilitation of Valerius' moral program. If the *exemplum* is more vivid, then the lesson it teaches will be more easily retained.[250]

A vivid *exemplum* on its own, however, is not enough for Valerius to achieve his purpose. No matter how powerful the 'image' a narrated *exemplum* may conjure, an incoherent series of them, carelessly shuffled beneath a unifying rubric, is unlikely to be persuasive or memorable. Some sort of management is required. Within a rubric, chronology and quality are the primary factors that generally order the *exempla*. Thus, anecdotes are usually presented in chronological order with occasional indications from Valerius himself that the current example is equal to or better than what has preceded or is perhaps the very best of the lot.[251] Valerius' deliberate selection (and arrangement) of *exempla* is particularly evident in these chronological-hierarchical rubrics insofar as the quality of the *exempla* advances with their timeline because Valerius has chosen those particular anecdotes. An additional consideration enters with the problem of transition. As Bloomer explains it, the "ability to move from one

[247] *Quod melius personis quam verbis repraesentabitu*r (IV.4.*praef*.).
[248] See Skidmore (1996) 83-84.
[249] V.4.*ext*.1: *haerent ac stupent hominum oculi, cum huius facti pictam imaginem vident, casusque antiqui condicionem praesentis spectaculi admiratione renovant, in illis mutis membrorum liniamentis viva ac spirantia corpora intueri credentes. quod necesse est animo quoque evenire, aliquanto efficaciore pictura litterarum <monumentis> vetera pro recentibus admonito recordari*; cf., Pliny *NH* 7.121.
[250] Skidmore (1996) 85.
[251] Bloomer (1992) 28-32.

exemplum to the next is not a narrow talent; it is essential to the declaimer who must hold an audience by surprise and paradox. It is also essential to the use of an *exemplum*, to argument by example since the speaker and adviser must always assert the relevance and connection of the paradigm to the present circumstances."[252] As Bloomer also points out, one of the results of this practice is an emphasis on antithesis.[253] How well or how elegantly Valerius completes this task is open to debate. What matters is that it occurs to him to link his material together, and this principle of transition and connection extends beyond the *exempla* to the rubrics.

Valerius handles the problem of movement from rubric to rubric with what looks like the equivalent of Suetonius' *divisiones*. These 'prefaces' present a clear introduction for each of his rubrics, and usually provide a direct connection with what has immediately preceded. Having discussed *paupertas*, for instance, Valerius' next rubric is *verecundia*. This progression, he says, is most opportune. For *verecundia* makes men disregard their private wealth in favor of public welfare.[254] Valerius can be more subtle than this, requiring his reader to follow along without explicit guidance,[255] but his decision to insert discrete prefaces at the intervals demanded by each of his rubrics at least clears up any confusion in going from one to another by marking their ends and beginnings.

In sum, Valerius' rubrics consist of *exempla* that are arranged by chronology or hierarchy, or even by some combination of the two. However they are ordered, the

---

[252] Bloomer (1992) 26; cf., Wardle (1998) 11-12.

[253] "When the overt structures that purport to tie a work together are the author's entries into the text and various rhetorical junctures, often metonymic, the structure of the whole will not seem organic. A highly subordinated, compact structure is not Valerius' aim. When transition, the verbal display of connection, is especially prized, the two parts to be joined will come to be more and more disparate. The reader is not simply being instructed in some antithetical mode of thought—having been told of one subject, be ready to entertain the opposite. Certain of Valerius' chapters do work this way, and the suitability of opposite examples for debate is obvious. But when the display of transition becomes a valued oral skill, the course of subjects is necessarily more and more discursive," Bloomer (1992) 25-26.

[254] *A qua tempestivus ad verecundiam transitus videtur*: *haec enim iustissimis viris praecepit ut privatas facultates neglegerent, publicas quam amplissimas esse cuperent* (4.5.*praef*.).

[255] The final rubric of the fourth book, for example, treats *liberalitas*. While the preface to the fifth book clearly joins itself to its predecessor, introducing *humanitas* and *clementia* as *liberalitatii aptiores comites*, the next rubric presents the *grati animi significationes* alongside *aptiores comites*. Topics, that is, that might be understood as the appropriate (or inappropriate) response of beneficiaries of the previous rubrics' acts. The link is thematic, emerging more from the general tenor of the rubrics rather than direct contact between the final *exemplum* of the previous rubric and the first of the current one.

exempla reflect a concern that goes beyond mere sequence. In addition to arranging them in a sort of logical order, Valerius marks the relevance of the *exempla* to their rubric by transitions that link each *exemplum* with its surrounding *exempla* as well as the greater rubric. In the rubric on military discipline, for example, Valerius moves from L. Calpurnius Piso to Q. Metellus thematically, by explicitly commenting on a 'severity' common to both men; the shift from Metellus to Q. Fabius Maximus is effected by noting that both men spent time in Contrebia.[256] The rubrics themselves acknowledge one another, forming a sort of greater unity beyond the kernel of the individual *exempla*. Rhetoric and program, moreover, need not be mutually exclusive, and the basic purpose of Valerius' exemplary style—convenience and persuasion—can also serve the pursuit of a larger perhaps moral agenda.[257] And this latter point is our ultimate objective in the consideration of the mechanics of the *Caesares*.

The Purpose of Suetonius' Organization (b): The Two-Way Rubric Rubric←→Rubric←→*Divisio*

What has been observed in Valerius can be applied to Suetonius with the occasional adjustment or addition. As we have already seen, Leo's monumental work on ancient biography attempted to explain Suetonius (and his use of rubrics) from the perspective of genre and this approach has certain limits. Leo was asking a 'why' question in search of the (biographical) origins of the rubrics in Suetonius. I am asking what Suetonius is doing. While *per species* arrangement is a feature that 'makes sense' for technical authors like Celsus, Vitruvius or Valerius, the use of rubrics is not unique to these 'lesser' writers, and can be found in the oratory and historiography of canonical notables such as Cicero and Tacitus.[258] Valerius is particularly useful to us on

[256] For Piso to Metellus, see *Val. Max.* 2.7.10: *Nec minus Pisone acriter Q. Metellus*; for Metellus to Fabius, see *Val. Max.* 2.7.11: *In eadem provincia Q. Fabius Maximus.*
[257] Cf., Wardle (1998) 14-15.
[258] For Cicero, see Lewis (1991) 3643ff.; for Tacitus, see Morgan (2006) 9 and 101.

the question of what Suetonius is doing because he provides a well-studied comparandum.

The programmatic statement with which Valerius opens the *FDM*, expressing its author's utilitarian and moral purpose (in rhetorical terms), finds no exact parallel in Suetonius. Though the Augustan *divisio* we noted early in this chapter is consistent with the idea of convenience—'so [the parts of his life] can be shown and understood more clearly' (*quo distinctius demonstrari cognoscique possint*)—no comparable statement of a greater overall purpose survives in the *Caesares*. While the question of Suetonius' purpose has been subject to speculation,[259] as in the case of Valerius, a satisfactory resolution is still wanting. Whatever comments the biographer may have made in this regard in a general preface to the *Caesares*, or the lost sections of the *Julius*, the best that one can hope is to reverse-engineer something approximating Suetonius' sentiments. At the most basic level of interpretation, the emphasis on the readers' convenience indicates that Suetonius did in fact have a purpose in composing the *Caesares* beyond the plain transmission of facts.

Both of the ordering principles maintained by Valerius, chronology and quality, are to be found in Suetonius. Chronological sequencing is perhaps most frequent in the catalogues of omens. The omens foretelling Augustus' success, for example, begin at his hometown Velitrae prior to his birth, proceed to him as an unborn fetus, and finally end with events at Philippi and Actium (*Aug.* 94-96).[260] Arrangement by quality or degree is especially notable in negative rubrics, as seen in the sexual misbehavior of Nero, who works his way from freeborn boys to his mother until finally submitting his

[259] See, *e.g.*, Baldwin (1983) 325-368, for a broad treatment of Suetonian 'themes and opinions.' Bradley (1991) 3701-3732 and Wallace-Hadrill (2004 [1983]) 99-197 offer more nuanced or guided approaches to the same problem, and most of Suetonius' commentators tend to follow their arguments, though Wardle (1994) 11-95 is notable for his extensive introduction. Rives' introduction to the most recent Penguin translation offers the most up-to-date summary (2007) xxiv-xxxv. Steidle (1951) is indispensable, but as Lounsbury (1987) 3 has observed, to little avail since.

[260] Cf., *Jul.* 81; *Tib.* 14; *Cal.* 57; *Nero* 46; *Galba* 4 and 18; *Vesp.* 5; *Dom.* 15.2-3. This series of omens also represents an example of the most significant parallel between Valerius and Suetonious, transition, to be discussed below. As Wardle (2008) 357 has observed, the eagles foretelling Augustus' future accession and victory over Antony and Lepidus effect a transition with the omen foretelling Augustus' death and deification when yet another eagle takes up its perch on the first letter of Agrippa's name atop a nearby temple during the census on the Campus Martius (97.1).

own body to violation by others (*Nero* 28-29).[261] Suetonius tends not to mimic Valerius' habit of mixing chronology and quality in his rubrics. The scope of Valerius' work is likely a factor in this difference between the two authors. Valerius, after all, has the entirety of Roman history (and more) at his disposal. Suetonius has only the life span of the emperor. Examples of the Valerian mixing are, however, in evidence. The rubric that treats Caligula's 'harshness of language', for example, is arranged by decreasing intimacy.[262] Caligula's first victim is his grandmother Antonia, then his cousin/adopted step-son Gemellus, then his sisters (*Cal.* 29.1), a former praetor, a group of prisoners, and finally some Gauls and Greeks (*Cal.* 29.2). While some of the events are difficult to date, the *exempla* appear to be in chronological sequence: Antonia (early May 37 AD), Gemellus (early 38 AD), Caligula's sisters (39 AD), the Gauls and the Greeks (39/40 AD).[263]

Additional schemes are also in evidence, among them social class (*e.g.*, Domitian's correction of public morals goes from the masses to the senate, before stopping with the gods; *Dom.* 8.3-5) and geography (*e.g.*, Caesar's plundering of Spain, Gaul, and Italy; 54).[264] Unlike Valerius, however, Suetonius rarely inserts any explicit personal comments about his *exempla*, marking one as the best or worst of the rubric, etc. There is the occasional quiet and editorial *quin*,[265] and sometimes an act is even described as *incredibilis* or the like.[266] But these are the exceptions rather than the norm. This silence has perhaps contributed to the common opinion of Suetonius as objective, but for now it is enough to say that whatever agenda Suetonius is pursuing he did not feel the need to remind his readers of it repeatedly, *exemplum* by *exemplum*. Keeping the reader reading, however, is a definite concern.

---

[261] While some of the events are historically murky, the list of victims appears to be roughly chronological: Antonia (early May 37 AD), Gemellus (late May 37 AD), Caligula's sisters (39 AD), the Gauls and the Greeks (39/40 AD). For the dates, see Wardle (1994) 162-164, 221-222, 228-230, and 253-255.

[262] *Immanissima facta augebat atrocitate verborum* (*Cal*. 29.1).

[263] Note that the date for Antonia is a *terminus ante quem*. Antonia died in early May 37, so Caligula's comments to her could have come well before Gemellus' death.

[264] Cf., *Tib*. 37.4.

[265] ***Quin***: *Cal*. 11. ***Quin et***: *Jul*. 14.1; *Aug*. 96.1; *Tib*. 2, 52.2, 66; *Cal*. 5, 33, 37.1; *Cl*. 6.1, 21.6; *Nero* 34.4; *Otho* 12.1; *Vesp*. 12; *Tit*. 8.1, 8.2; *Dom*. 2.1. ***Quin etiam***: *Jul*. 79.3; *Aug*. 19.2; *Tib*. 30; *Nero* 32.3; 57.2; *Galba* 15.2; ***Quin immo***: *Nero* 42.2.

[266] See, *e.g.*, *Jul*. 57; *Aug*. 94.12; and *Cal*. 10.2 and 37.3.

Transition is the most important parallel between Valerius and Suetonius, and like Valerius, Suetonius sometimes makes use of antithesis to link his *exempla*. In describing Augustus' behavior as *patronus dominusque*, for example, Suetonius' first *exemplum* recounts the fettering of a verbally abusive slave; in the next *exemplum*, the verbal abuse comes from Augustus himself, who teasingly jokes about his *dispensator*'s fear of a wild boar. But the *princeps* cannot make light of every failing, and in the third *exemplum* he forces his freedman Polus to commit suicide after learning of the man's many dalliances with the *matronae* of Rome (*Aug*. 67.1). All three *exempla* are linked by the theme of crime and punishment, but the development from one instance to the next adopts a course of unexpected shifts in the elements to be contrasted. From a punishment doled out as the result of verbal abuse to verbal abuse being the punishment itself, the final contrast elevates the situation, raising the severity of the transgression as well as its penalty.[267] Conjunctions and particles—*nam*, *tamen*, *autem*, *quidem*, etc.—also play a part in the mechanics of transition, responding to and building upon the preceding *exemplum*, and in the chronologically arranged rubrics marks of time naturally appear as well, *mox*, *post*, *tunc*, etc.

More critical is the problem of movement from rubric to rubric, and in this Suetonius departs from Valerius. As we noted in our summary of Townend's observations, the biographer has a tendency to schedule an entire series of rubrics within a single *divisio* rather than one rubric per *divisio* or preface in the Valerian manner. Following this announcement of the topics in the leading *divisio*, Suetonius then revisits each in due course, as in the case of Nero's vices—*petulantia*, *libido*, *luxuria*, *avaritia* and *crudelitas*—without providing an explicit prompt as he completes one rubric and starts the next (*e.g*., 'Having demonstrated Nero's sexual excess, I shall now proceed to his material extravagance.').[268] This lack of clearly designated sectors,

[267] Suetonius is also capable of writing chronological narrative around antithesis. In the *Domitian*, Suetonius constructs his account of Domitian's activities at Rome during the Vitellian war around a contrast between many and one. Domitian first takes refuge with his uncle and some of his partisans on the Capitol (*Dom*. 18.2); when the temple is burned, Domitian then seeks the protection of the lone *aedituus* (*Dom*. 18.2); Domitian returns to the safety of numbers the next morning, hiding himself within a group of cultists, before finally returning to the protection offered by a single individual, the mother of one of his former classmates (18.2).

[268] See *Nero* 26-38 (*petulantia*, 26; *libido* 27-29; *luxuria*, 30-31.3; *avaritia*, 31.4-32; *crudelitas*, 33-38).

viewed in the context of Valerius' routinely demarcated rubrics, points to the most significant difference in what each author demands or expects of his transitions. The numerous prefaces that front Valerius' rubrics result in a work that seems to run in parallel as much as it does in sequence. That is to say, the separation of the rubrics almost makes them self-contained rather than continuous, and it is only the prefaces' expressions of contextualizing and moralizing transitions that ultimately prevent a strict 'handbook' reading of the *FDM*.[269]

Suetonius' trick, from this perspective, is the creation of an illusion—a string of rubrics that appears to be continuous. Where Valerius regularly interrupts his text in order to guide his reader, Suetonius is absent, using 'silent' transitions to maintain an uninterrupted flow of information. The methods he employs to achieve this are identical to those involved in the move from *exemplum* to *exemplum*. The only difference is the level or scale of the elements involved. The *exempla* themselves, in other words, are carefully linked together beneath a rubric that is itself tied into a larger scheme involving yet more rubrics. A brief demonstration is in order to emphasize the manner of execution as well as to make a final point regarding Suetonius' rubrics as they relate to his *divisiones.*

After giving an account of Julius Caesar's management and treatment of his soldiers during imminent defeat, panic, victory and even mutiny (*Jul.* 62-70), Suetonius enters upon the eventual dictator's conduct towards his clients.[270] The link between the military and domestic spheres starts with the insubordination of the 10th legion. Despite the ongoing war in Africa, Caesar's troops demand their discharge and rewards. Caesar then addresses his troops as 'Quirites' rather 'soldiers', and thus brings them to heel with a 'single word'. The disobedient troops 'respond immediately' and insist that

[269] Based on the manuscripts, modern editions of Valerius' text contain headings at the start of each rubric (*e.g*., *de religione*, *de miraculis*, etc.). On the basis of Valerius' syntax and the disruption of the transitions from rubric to rubric that the headings cause, it has long been agreed that these are the work of early copyists. The prefaces are, in short, what ties the work together; see Wardle (1998) 6n.22 and 14-15.

[270] These rubrics represent part of Caesar's *bellica studia*, as anticipated by the *divisio* discussed earlier (*Jul*. 44.4).

they be allowed to continue to serve their general.[271] Caesar's attitude towards his dependents, *studium et fides erga clientis*,[272] immediately follows this anecdote and contains the very qualities—devotion and loyalty—that Caesar's troops had so recently forgotten and then remember. The same general theme thus persists from one rubric to the next, though the actors (and the audience) have changed. The soldiers first exhibit a clear failure of both *studium* and *fides* only to remember them, and Caesar himself then becomes an example of the same two qualities. In the first instance, the audience or target is Caesar, and in the second, his *clientes*. The harsh critic might object that this represents a case of misdirection. So tightly linked to the theme of the previous rubric's mutinous soldiers do the *studium et fides* that introduce Caesar's *clientes* seem, that one perhaps expects to read more of Caesar's soldiers rather than of anything about a different set of his dependents. That the element itself—*studium et fides*—can move between the two rubrics, however, is what makes the transition work.[273]

The next several rubrics arise in similar fashion. The rubric detailing Caesar's treatment of his friends naturally adopts a more intimate set of qualities, 'affability and kindness'.[274] The hierarchical progression from *clientes* to *amici* is logical enough, and after Suetonius completes the latter rubric, he moves on to the other side of friendship, *simultates*, only to comment that Caesar 'never formed any that were so bad he was unwilling to let them go at the first opportunity'.[275] The shift from untroubled co-existence with *amici* to civil *simultates* with social equals is thus united by a pattern of (mild) behavior that is consistent with what Suetonius has so far demonstrated of Caesar, and the biographer in fact goes on to expand upon Caesar's *lenitas*, *moderatio* and *clementia* (74-75). Owing to the coherent manner in which they are joined, the rubrics do not require Suetonius' personal entrance into the biography to announce

[271] *Sed una voce, qua Quirites eos pro militibus appellarat, tam facile circumegit et flexit, ut ei milites esse confestim responderint et quamvis recusantem ultro in Africam sint secuti; ac sic quoque seditiosissimum quemque et praedae et agri destinati tertia parte multavit* (*Jul.* 70).
[272] *Studium et fides erga clientis ne iuveni quidem defuerunt* (*Jul.* 71).
[273] To the extent that Caesar's soldiers depend on him, they are at least his 'quasi-clients'.
[274] *Amicos tanta semper facilitate indulgentiaeque tractavit, ut Gaio Oppio comitanti se per silvestre iter correptoque subita valitudine deversoriolo*[*co*]*, quod unum erat, cesserit et ipse humi ac sub divo cubuerit* (*Jul.* 72).
[275] *Simultates contra nullas tam graves excepit umquam, ut non occasione oblata libens deponeret* (*Jul.* 73).

them. Insofar as each rubric makes contact with the one before and after it, the account maintains more than a semblance of continuity. Like the *divisiones*, then, Suetonius' rubrics have a bipolar quality requiring that they be read for their general, as well as their immediate, location in a *Life*.

But all this Caesarian material, and everything that surrounds it, has its justification in the transitional-organizational *divisio* that occurs much earlier in the *Life*: 'Before I speak of [Caesar's death], it will not be irrelevant to go over [Caesar's] *forma*, *habitus*, *cultus*, and *mores* as well as his civil and martial pursuits'.[276] Its specific place in the *divisio's* program falls under the general heading of 'civil and martial pursuits', in which Suetonius advertises none of the particular traits or qualities that actually represent the later rubrics (*e.g.*, *fides*, *indulgentia*, etc.). So despite its ostensible organizational purpose, the *divisio* in Suetonius is not, as I noted earlier in this chapter, an efficient organizational system.[277] But it is unwise to assume that it must be such, and no more. We might even say that this expectation is precisely what has led to the fixation on Suetonius' rubrics at the expense of his *divisiones*. The harmony that the biographer's *exempla* and rubrics exhibit has been demonstrated. Suetonius manages both figures in such a way that they flow from one to the other, beginning with the *divisio* that governs them and ending with a transition that moves the biographer's account to the next *divisio*. This process of transitions without authorial interruption means that Suetonius' work exhibits less frequent 'breaks' than Valerius', and gives the *Caesares* a sense of continuity. Suetonius' absence inside the rubics—or, perhaps better, inside the rubrics bound by the *divisiones*—thus renders his *divisiones* all the more remarkable for the unique opportunity with which they provide him to enter the *Lives*, so let me now move on to an examination of some of the things that Suetonius actually says in the *divisiones*.

---

[276] *De qua prius quam dicam, ea quae ad formam et habitum et cultum et mores, nec minus quae ad civilia et bellica eius studia pertineant* (*Jul.* 44.4).

[277] It may be worth noting, however, that Suetonius might have found listing in the *divisio* every rubric he intended to cover undesirable. For instead of the general *civilia ac bellica studia*, Suetonius would have written 'it will not be irrelevant to go over Caesar's *forma*, *habitus*, *cultus*, *mores* (by which I mean his banquets, sexual behavior and love affairs, and consumption of wine), as well as his lack of *abstinentia*, eloquence, writing, physical skills, execution of military campaigns, religion, his military successes and his *constantia*, his management of his troops, etc.'.

Bound by Rubric:
the *Divisio* in Suetonius

Bad emperors sometimes make for an easy *divisio*. When he separates the *princeps*' good deeds from their opposite, the flat assertion is all Suetonius needs to get his point across. Having discussed Caligula the *princeps*, for example, Suetonius says that 'the rest [of the *Life*] will be about a *monstrum*'.[278] But the process that enables this direct approach is not uncomplicated. We have already seen some of the mechanics behind this in the *exempla*, rubrics, and, somewhat generally, the *divisiones*. In this section, we shall take a final, general look at the *divisiones*—what judgments they express and how Suetonius arrives at and supports them—before revisiting the organizational purpose they are supposed to fulfill.

Unequivocal and bald judgments are, as I suggested, most readily discernible—or, at least, most memorable—in the *Lives* of the bad emperors. Tiberius and his Julio-Claudian successors, Galba, Otho and Vitellius, and finally Domitian all receive critical *divisiones* worthy of their vices. Tiberius is 'hated and abominable', Nero characterized by 'disgrace and crime', Galba well known for his 'cruelty as well as his greed' and so on.[279] Suetonius then proceeds to the rubrics that will support the judgment the *divisio* has rendered.[280] The good emperors, on the other hand, generally come in for what seems to be relatively muted praise. Of Vespasian, the biographer comments that at least he could be deservedly criticized for only a single fault, *cupiditas*.[281] Even in the case of the *Caesares*' most obvious candidate for florid praise, Augustus, Suetonius exercises restraint, commenting that in practically every aspect of his private life the first *princeps* was 'most restrained' and 'without suspicion of any vice'.[282] And this after

---

[278] *Hactenus quasi de principe, reliqua ut de monstro narranda sunt* (*Cal*. 22.1).
[279] *Quam inter haec non modo invisus ac detestabilis, sed praetrepidus quoque atque etiam contumeliis obnoxius vixerit, multa indicia sunt* (*Tib*. 63.1); *Haec partim nulla reprehensione, partim etiam non mediocri laude digna in unum contuli, ut secernerem a probris ac sceleribus eius, de quibus dehinc dicam* (*Nero* 19.3); *Praecesserat de eo fama saevitiae simul atque avaritiae* (*Galba* 12).
[280] For Tiberius, see *Tib*. 63-67. The Neronian *divisio*, as we observed above, is programmatic, and it covers a broad expanse of text, *Nero* 20-39. For Galba, see *Galba* 12-16.
[281] *Sola est, in qua merito culpetur, pecuniae cupiditas* (*Vesp*. 16.1).
[282] *In ceteribus partibus vitae continentissimum constat ac sine suspicione ullius vitii* (*Aug*. 72.1).

acknowledging his penchant for deflowering virgins and for gambling (*Aug*. 71). To garner the sort of praise that is heaped on Titus, at least one of Suetonius' criteria appears to be improvement. For prior to his accession, Titus had been thought by his contemporaries to be an *alius Nero.*[283]

Divisiones, however, are agents of neither change nor truth. When they express judgments, they do so on the basis of the behaviors exhibited within the rubrics they govern. That Titus was not another Nero because of his previously unrecognized virtues is a subject for a *divisio*. But the proof of this is covered by the rubrics. So while it has generally been agreed that Suetonius' rubrics comprise the greatest part of a systematic, if not entirely cohesive, evaluation of the emperors, the approach I have adopted requires that this view be refined. Frequently, though not invariably, Suetonius reveals his decision regarding the emperor in a judgmental *divisio* that his reader encounters prior to whatever series of rubrics are scheduled. The evaluation, in other words, is already decided by the time the rubrics start.[284]

That the rubrics prove whatever judgment the *divisiones* render may by itself seem insufficient justification for the scale of their inclusion. Here we need to make a distinction between the *divisiones*' judgments and the actual substance of the rubrics' proof. When, for instance, Suetonius says that Caligula was 'cruel by nature', he specifies nothing beyond cruelty and there is any number of ways in which he might demonstrate it.[285] The several rubrics that demonstrate the different aspects of Caligula's cruelty and that the organizational cruelty-*divisio* governs (*Cal*. 27-32), however, continue a train of thought that has begun several rubrics prior, dealing with Caligula's habits in contracting and disposing of his wives that arise out of the earlier programmatic *monstrum-divisio.*[286]

---

[283] *Denique propalam alium Neronem et opinbantur et praedicabant. At illi ea fama pro bono cessit conversaque est in maximas laudes neque vitio ullo reperto et contra virtutibus summis* (*Tit*. 7.1).
[284] Cf., Kaster (1995) 321 on this habit of presentation in the *DGR*.
[285] *Saevitiam ingenii per haec maxime ostendit* (*Cal*. 27.1). *Per haec* is especially vague.
[286] The progression is as follows: wives (25), friends and associates (26.1), the *ordines* (26.2-5) and *saevitia* (27).

It is difficult, says the biographer, to determine whether Caligula was 'more disgraceful' in marriage or divorce.[287] The irregularity and insensitivity the emperor displays in this arena build up to the lethal consequences of the cruelty-*divisio* that extends beyond his immediate and intimate circle. After detailing Caligula's marriage habits, Suetonius links them to the emperor's treatment of his friends and relatives. The biographer observes that it would be 'trivial and dull to add to these things [*i.e.*, Caligula's marriage habits],' the fact that all of Caligula's relatives and friends met with 'gory deaths'.[288] After this account, Suetonius next comments that Caligula was 'hardly any more respectful and lenient' towards the senate, and then describes the beatings to which the emperor subjected certain social elites.[289] The final rubric before the cruelty-*divisio* starts with the observation that Caligula treated the remaining orders with 'similar arrogance and violence'.[290] The rubrics that then follow from the cruelty-*divisio* are consistent with the mandate of their *divisio*, but the substance of their *exempla*—treating people outside Caligula's immediate circle—are the product of the progression developed outside the *divisio*.[291] The strangeness of Caligula's marriages and breakups 'makes sense' in the context of a person who, as it turns out, has respect for no man or woman.

Suetonius' execution of his *divisio*-rubric combination can thus look ahead to what is coming rather than simply being tied to it by superficial transitions. While Suetonius clearly links the individual rubrics of Caligula's marriage habits and his treatment of the orders, his purpose is also to drive his account forward to the cruelty-*divisio*. More generally, we can say that there is a reason for each rubric to be where the biographer places it.[292] Rather than a presentation of isolated rubrics that are independent of one another, we should think of a more reciprocal arrangement in

---

[287] *Matrimonia contraxerit turpius an dimiserit an tenuerit, non est facile discernere* (*Cal.* 25.1).
[288] *Leve ac frigidum sit his addere, quo propinquos amicosque pacto tractaverit...quibus omnibus pro necessitudinis iure proque meritorum gratia cruenta mors persoluta est* (*Cal.* 26.1).
[289] *Nihilo reverentior leniorve erga senatum* (*Cal.* 26.2).
[290] *Simili superbia violentiaque ceteros tractavit ordines* (*Cal.* 27.4).
[291] See Steidle (1951) 245 and Wardle (1994) 23 and 245-246 for comments on the rubrics from this point in the narrative onward.
[292] As Wardle (1994) 230 has observed, in the case of emperors like Caligula who marry both before and during their reign, Suetonius generally places the pre-accession unions in their appropriate chronological context. Any others receive a rubric of their own somewhere in the sequence of the *per species* bulk of the *Life*.

which the rubrics are mutually dependent. This may seem circular, but that is to be expected in a system of presentation (and argument) that starts with its conclusions. To the extent that this process is not readily apparent to the casual reader, the care with which Suetonius manages the transitions from *exemplum* to *exemplum*, and from rubric to rubric, becomes almost admirable. Some might even dare say, artistic.

A further consideration is the question of transition from *divisio* to *divisio*. In the case of the *Caligula* it is easy enough to understand every authorial statement in the latter portion of the *Life* as a 'sub-*divisio*' of the primary *monstrum-divisio*.[293] The link from the *monstrum-divisio* to the cruelty-*divisio* is perhaps readily inferable from the brief examination above.[294] It will be useful, however, to look at sections from two other *Lives* in order to get a sense of how Suetonius can use the *divisio* for reasons less obvious than establishing a clear litany of vices, as well as to explore some of the problems raised by a 'phased' *Life* like the *Domitian* in which chronology will play a larger role than one might expect in what is usually taken to be a *per species* biography.

Our first case returns us to the *Life* of Julius and one of the *divisiones* with which we began our discussion. Here, Suetonius states that he will cover the dictator's *forma*, *habitus*, *cultus*, *mores*, and *civilia ac bellica studia* (*Jul*. 44.4). As I noted above, the *divisio* does not explain the relevance of the material it proposes, nor does it offer any specifics (*e.g.*, specific kinds of *civilia studia*), and in that sense seems organizational. One thing that it clearly does do is put off the inevitable and well-known assassination, and in this regard seems transitional as well. It even uses Caesar's death to introduce itself, 'death cut him off as he was doing and planning such things'.[295] After the very long expanse of text required to fill out the topics prescribed by the *divisio* (45-74), Suetonius comes to the final rubric of the set (75). Numerous 'sub-*divisiones*' have marked the tract of text leading up to this point, and this last rubric is no different: 'he demonstrated admirable moderation and clemency in both his conduct of and

[293] Cf., Wardle (1994) 230.
[294] Caligula's marriages (25) are linked to his friends and associates by the *divisio*'s demonstrative *hi* (26.1); the link from these to his treatment of the *ordines* is achieved by the next *divisio*'s comparative *nihilo reverentior leniorve* (26.2). *Saevitia* then enters almost as a foregone conclusion (26.5).
[295] *talia agentem atque meditantem mors praevenit* (*Jul*. 44.4).

successful conclusion to the civil war'.[296] The adjective admirable (*admirabilis*) plainly indicates Suetonius' approval of the dictator on this point, and most of what has preceded has been positive as well. The next rubric is fronted by another globally organizing *divisio* even broader in proposed topics than its predecessor. The rest of Caesar's deeds and words, says Suetonius, nevertheless (*tamen*) led people to think that he was justly murdered.[297]

'Nevertheless' (*tamen*) can be understood in three ways. It can respond to what has directly preceded, namely, the final example of Caesar's clemency (75.6), or it can respond directly to the rubric expressing approval for that clemency, *clementia admirabilis*. What is most significant, however, is that this *divisio*—rendering a final verdict of Caesar's conduct—provides a retrograde explanation of the relevance of the *forma*, *habitus*, *cultus*, *mores*, and *civilia ac bellica studia* introduced by the previous organizational *divisio*. While planning many things, Caesar was cut off by death. But before Suetonius will treat that event, he wants to include a variety of details about the man's habits. Having concluded this, he finally reveals that all of it represented what was good about Caesar. The last major *divisio* makes this clear: 'the rest' of Caesar's deeds and words—which is to say, those that were not included in the earlier rubrics—turned the scales of judgment against him, earning the dictator the death he received. The point of delaying Caesar's assassination is therefore more than to achieve suspense or to force the fruits of the biographer's research upon his audience. It is a rhetorical balancing of accounts drawn together by the *divisiones* in which the first *divisio* presents Caesar's positive attributes only to be outweighed the negative words and deeds of the second *divisio*.

What prevents the *Domitian*, on the other hand, from reading like a Caesarian spreadsheet is a different application of the *divisiones*. The *divisio* that formally introduces Domitian's reign occurs *inter initia principatus* and maintains the timeline of

[296] *Moderationem vero clementiamque cum in administratione tum in victoria belli civlis admirabilem exhibuit* (*Jul.* 75.1).
[297] *Praegravant tamen cetera facta dictaque eius, ut et abusus dominatione et iure caesus existimetur* (*Jul*. 76.1).

the preceding rubric which ended with Titus' death (*Dom.* 2.3).[298] This *divisio* treats Domitian's tendency towards solitude, before moving on to his wife and children. Insofar as this *divisio* does not cover Domitian's principate as such in the way a reader might have expected from its opening words, *inter initia principatus*, the next *divisio* is necessary. This next *divisio*, following soon after the first, is programmatic and covers the general character of his administration. It is chronological to the extent that it advances the timeline. 'Domitian was inconsistent for some time', it says, 'with an equal mixture of virtues and vices until he turned his virtues into vices (*i.e.*, some time after *inter initia principatus*)'.[299] The rubrics on Domitian's games and festivals (*Dom.* 4), building program (*Dom.* 5), campaigns (*Dom.* 6), innovations (*Dom.* 7), and administration of justice (*Dom.* 8) proceed from this *divisio*.

The next *divisio* breaks from the chronology of the previous two *divisiones* and travels back to Vespasian's reign just after the conclusion of the civil war. The *divisio* is necessary because Suetonius is no longer speaking exclusively of Domitian's reign in the manner of the second *divisio*. This third *divisio* credits Domitian with *abstinentia* and even *liberalitatis experimenta* and presents the appropriate rubrics.[300] The fourth *divisio* continues the thread of the third and is necessitated by Domitian's switch from *clementia* and *abstinentia* to the new rubrics of *saevitia* and *cupiditas* that will occupy much of the next three chapters (*Dom.* 10-12.2).[301] The material of this *divisio* ends with Domitian as *princeps*. The fifth and final *divisio* before the set-up for Domitian's assassination is necessary owing to Suetonius' intention to break the narrative's chronology as established by the third and fourth *divisiones* and return to Domitian's youth when Vespasian was *princeps*. This *divisio* introduces the new rubric of

---

[298] *Inter initia principatus cotidie secretum sibi horarum sumere solebat* (*Dom.* 3.1).
[299] *Circa administrationem imperii aliquam diu se varium praestitit, mixtura quoque aequabili vitiorum atque virtutum, donec virtutes quoque in vitia deflexit*: *quantum coniectare licet, super ingenii naturam inopia rapax, metu saevus* (*Dom.* 3.2).
[300] *Inter initia usque adeo ab omni caede abhorrebat, ut absente adhuc patre recordatus Vergil*[*i*] *versum…edicere destinarit, ne boves immolarentur. Cupiditatis quoque atque avaritiae vix suspicionem ullam aut privatus umquam aut princeps aliquam dedit, immo e diverso magna saepe non abstinentiae modo sed etiam liberalitatis experimenta* (*Dom.* 9.1).
[301] *Sed neque in clementiae neque in abstinentiae tenore permansit, et tamen aliquanto celerius ad saevitiam descivit quam ad cupiditatem* (*Dom.* 10.1). Note that *sed* is a direct rejoineder to the previous *divisio*'s contents as well.

Domitian's *minime civilis animus* that will fill out the final chapter before the *divisio* that introduces the plot formed against the emperor (*Dom*. 14.1).[302]

Whereas the *Life* of Caesar's *divisiones* can be strung together in a neat point-counterpoint relationship, those of the *Domitian* seem to work on the basis of a chronologically discontinuous frame intended to call attention to what is being measured. This is not so much time itself as it is Domitian's degeneration over time. The second *divisio* fully articulates this when it speaks of the perversion of Domitian's virtues into vices. The third and the fourth *divisiones* divide this agenda between themselves. The third picks up Domitian's virtues, and the fourth his vices. The chronology established by the second *divisio* when Domitian is *princeps* is broken by the third's return to Vespasian's reign. Suetonius no longer intends to speak of Domitian only as emperor, and this makes the third *divisio* necessary. The fourth *divisio* then presents itself as the chronological continuator of its predecessor, while at the same time repeating the shift from virtue to vice set up by the second *divisio*. Were it possible to imagine the *Domitian* without the 'phases' its *divisiones* creates, the *Life* might appear to mimic the *Julius*. For without its phases, the *Domitian*'s switch from virtue to vice might seem parallel to the *Julius*' presentation in which Caesar's vices finally outweigh his virtues. Suetonius' point, as expressed in the second *divisio*, is that Domitian had no virtues by the end of his reign. The repeated chronological backtracking of the *divisiones* to Domitian's pre-accession life, in other words, emphasizes the fact that Domitian, as *princeps*, became worse. Suetonius' concern is what Domitian as emperor did.

Similar chronological play can be detected in other *Lives*, most notably the 'phased' *Tiberius*.[303] The broader and more significant issue is what this can tell us about Suetonius' choice, as expressed in the *Augustus*, to adopt *per species* over *per*

[302] *Ab iuventa minime civilis animi, confidens etiam et cum verbis tum rebus immodicus* (*Dom*. 12.3).
[303] This is not to say that the *Domitian* and the *Tiberius* are identical. The Tiberian phases are driven partly by the emperor's geographical moves as well as his personal dissimulation, neither of which Suetonius brings up for Domitian (see *Tib*. 26.1, 33, and 41-42).

tempora arrangement.[304] For, from chronologically arranged rubrics to the phases of Domitian's *Life*, it is clear that Suetonius has an appreciation for the convenience that chronology sometimes affords a narrative. The phases of Domitian's reign and degeneration are designated in the *divisiones* and are not presented as a degenerative process within the rubrics. Suetonius does not trace the degeneration of Domitian's *abstinentia*, for one, into *saevitia* chronologically. The transformation takes places only after a *divisio* that indicates the introduction of new rubrics. But the final shift from virtue to vice at least appears to be chronological by the terms of the *divisio* that establishes a linear development for them.[305] This does not always happen in the *Caesares*, and the clearest example is the *monstrum-divisio* in the *Caligula*. Though some have supposed the breach between *princeps* and *monstrum* to be chronological,[306] this is unlikely owing to the historical overlap between the two. For some of Caligula the *monstrum* chronologically precedes the vestiges of Caligula the prince. The division, and the *divisio*, is moral. So, too, in the *Domitian*, but with the added factor of time. What separates the *Domitian* from the *Caligula* in this regard—even with the chronological play—is the fact that Domitian's switch from virtue to vice is chronological (in the third to fourth *divisio*). That the decisive movement in the *Domitian* occurs in the *divisio* and not the rubric emphasizes the importance of the former over the latter. Without the guidance of the *divisiones*, the rubrics would be little more than the 'compilation of facts' that the Imperial *Lives* have so often been interpreted as being.

Suetonius generally does what he says he will. The difficulty is that the *Caesares* must sometimes bend sideways in order to get there. Domitian's degeneration over time, for example, would seem better suited to chronological arrangement. The competing goal of demonstrating the *princeps*' responsibility for his actions—rather than whatever he did pre-accession—might be said to override this consideration given

[304] *Proposita vitae eius velut summa parte*[*s*] *singillatim neque per tempora sed per species exequar, quo distinctius cognoscique possint* (*Aug*. 9.1).
[305] Suetonius says that Domitian turned to *saevitia* somewhat more quickly than he did to *cupiditas* (*Dom*. 10.1). The order of the subsequent then bears this out, with *saevitia* (*Dom*. 10.1-11) preceding *cupiditas* (*Dom*. 12.1-2).
[306] See, *e.g.*, Ceasescu (1973) 270 who pinpoints Caligula's illness as the setting for the *divisio*. Wardle (1994) 202 points out the historical problems with this interpretation.

the fact that Suetonius generally avoids extended chronology. The *Domitian* might even seem forced into its rubrics from this point of view. From an organizational perspective, the *divisiones* effect transitions that inform Suetonius' readers about how to think of what the emperor is going to do without necessarily anticipating the precise nature of his deeds. That is the purpose of the *divisio*'s judgment and the evaluation that precedes its proof. The occasional lack of clear signposting in both the *divisiones* and the rubrics serves to avoid distraction from that judgment, and allows Suetonius to pursue the goal of making the emperor responsible for everything that will follow. As a rhetorical strategy, this approach promotes *per species* over *per tempora* arrangement insofar as the former allows him to demonstrate the emperor's behavior on a particular topic over time in a convenient manner. Hence the complexity of a phased *Life* like the *Domitian* where the goal is to show the emperor's gradual degeneration. Suetonius' basic problem is that Domitian's behavior was not consistent over time. Again, however, the biographer's emphasis is on what the emperor does as emperor and on how the reader should think about it.

In the next chapter, I will provide a fuller demonstration of how I think Suetonius uses the *divisio* to focus on the emperor's behavior by restricting myself to a single topic, the emperor's death, in each of the *Lives*. This will give us a clearer picture of the way in which the *divisiones* guide the biographer's narrative. The *divisiones* remark on a situation that the emperor's behavior has created, and the material that follows explores how he manages this state of affairs as a function of what he is able to control. That the *divisiones* play a prominent part in constructing this will also serve to reinforce their importance in the *Caesares* as I have argued it in this chapter.

Chapter 4: Death

Of the twelve men whose lives are recounted in the *Caesares*, eight—Caesar, Caligula, Claudius, Nero, Galba, Otho, Vitellius, and Domitian—die violently or unnaturally. Though Suetonius never endorses the rumor, on two separate occasions he mentions the possibility that Tiberius was murdered by his successor Caligula.[307] Only Augustus, Vespasian, and Titus escape unscathed from the plots of their subjects.

Suetonius generally announces the sections that will relate the emperor's death with a *divisio*. The biographer's *divisiones*, as we have already seen, frequently express judgments, and Suetonius does more than merely report the details of the Caesars' deaths. The *divisiones* that introduce the emperors' deaths often assure Suetonius' readers that, in the minds of their contemporaries or even of the biographer himself, these men deserved to die the way they did. These judgments naturally precede the death scenes, sometimes by a large margin, and the topic of this chapter is how Suetonius builds up to the account of the emperor's death in the context of the sentiments contained within the *divisio*. Now, as in my discussion of the genealogies, some of what follows may seem an argument for the obvious. That certain men judged an emperor worthy of death is by itself no revelation. The emperor's bleeding corpse alone would be proof enough that some of his subjects were unhappy with him. But in the case of the bad emperors in particular, what is critical is the mechanism the biographer uses to construct the impasse between the emperor and his frustrated subjects and, again, this will emphasize the importance of the *divisio* in the *Caesares*.

As I have argued in the previous chapters, Suetonius presents the emperors as responsible individuals. For their deaths, I will pursue a similar argument, but focus on the circumstances the *divisio* lays out and how the emperor responds to those circumstances. In the case of the good emperor, I will ask to what extent Suetonius' presentation of their deaths accords with their deaths. In the case of the violent deaths, on the other hand, the *princeps* must provide no indication of an alternative

[307] *Tib*. 73.2 (*sunt qui putent*) and *Cal*. 12.2-3 (*cum sint quidam auctores*).

(and better) future. He will not modify his behavior, and things will not improve. On this particular point, one (perhaps overdue) objection to my approach might be whether or not Suetonius thinks that can in fact modify his behavior and so correct the problems he has created. While I will present a fuller account of my opinion on this question in **Appendix B**, I provide a brief account of my view here to move my argument forward. By the interpretation I have been advancing throughout this dissertation, Suetonius is unlikely to be interested in the character as such of any given emperor (though it may seem that he is at times), since that would raise questions about an emperor's ability to control his character at any time, be it by self-control or some external pressure. Or, perhaps less circularly, if an emperor's character is a given, he must be a 'slave' to it, or that at least would be the impression created, and that raises abstract rather than concrete issues. What interests Suetonius is the practical question of what is in an emperor's character, as evidenced by his actions (especially those that fall within this reign), and so whether the emperor functions well or badly *qua* emperor. As I have noted, this is precisely the question that I will explore in this chapter—how, that is, does the emperor behave, what responses or situations does that give rise to, and does he respond appropriately in turn when necessary.

My order of presentation will follow general categories or themes. Nero and Otho, for example, will be treated together as the *Caesares*' only two suicides. Within in each group, I will divide my discussion between an examination of each of the relevant *divisiones* before proceeding to the material that contains the death scenes. For the *divisiones*, I will try to demonstrate the patterns that Suetonius follows throughout the *Caesares* in how he presents the emperors' deaths. As we shall see, Suetonius does not accord the good emperors special treatment, but asks the same questions of them as he does of the bad emperors. Finally, where possible, I will include the variant account of other authors to demonstrate more clearly that Suetonius is making narrative choices in the way that he presents the emperors' deaths.

Violent Deaths (*Divisio*): Caesar and Domitian Caligula, Galba, and Vitellius

In the *Caesar* and the *Domitian*, the *divisio* locates the conspiracy that leads to its respective subject's death in the context of general, contemporary dissatisfaction. Suetonius adopts a slightly different approach in the *Caligula*, *Galba*, and *Vitellius*, and for different reasons in each *Life*. For the sake of convenience, I will start with the *Caesar* and the *Domitian* as their similarity provides a relatively straightforward introduction to our discussion.

'Therefore the plots that had previously been scattered, often with only two or three in a group,' says Suetonius in the *Julius*, 'all came together; for not even the people were satisfied with the current situation at this point and, both in secret and in public, scorned Caesar's *dominatio* and demanded liberators'.[308] This is one of the baldest exposures of discontent that occurs in the *Caesares*, and Suetonius' *divisio* almost makes it look as if Caesar's assassins were responding directly to the public outcry. By referring expressly to the 'people' as a group distinct from Caesar's assassins, the *divisio* establishes the sweep of disaffection Caesar had roused. It ranged from the common folk to Caesar's senatorial peers (and murderers). Insofar as the final conspiracy and Caesar's death are sufficient proof for the dissatisfaction Suetonius notes, the separation between the assassins and the people also suggests that Suetonius' interest is not solely in active participation. Suetonius does not, in other words, need to mention the people. So though the people were not directly involved in Caesar's death, his assassins were not acting in a vacuum. Practically everyone, as Suetonius presents it, was unhappy.[309]

---

[308] *Consilia igitur dispersim antea habita et quae saepe bini ternive ceperant, in unum omnes contulerunt, ne populo quidem iam praesenti statu laeto, sed clam palamque detrectante dominationem atque assertores flagitante* (*Dom.* 80.1).

[309] Plutarch says much the same in his account of the dictator: Τὸ δ' ἐμφανὲς μάλιστα μῖσος καὶ θανατηφόρον ἐπ' αὐτὸν ὁ τῆς βασιλείας ἔρως ἐξειργάσατο, τοῖς μὲν πολλοῖς αἰτία πρώτη, τοῖς δ' ὑπούλοις πάλαι πρόφασις εὐπρεπεστάτη γενομένη (*Caes.* 60.1-2). As we shall see, however, his presentation of the events that lead to Caesar's assassination are quite different from Suetonius'.

The *Domitian* works in similar fashion. 'Made frightening and hateful to everyone (*cuncti*) because of these deeds, Domitian was finally put down by a conspiracy involving his friends and close freedmen and even his wife'.[310] The 'everyone else' or *cuncti* makes clear the extent of the displeasure Domitian caused. As in the *Julius*, Suetonius also draws a distinction between those who were unhappy and those who acted. Moreover, the biographer again has little need to mention the *cuncti* when it is Domitian's associates who end up as his assassins. The *divisio* adds to the sentiment that motivates the conspirators by making it common. In short, the general formula for both the *Julius* and the *Domitian* is to situate their respective conspiracies within a context of clearly articulated, widespread resentment. To the extent that Suetonius does not need the latter in order to advance the *Life*, how Suetonius presents the reasons for the negative sentiment requires investigation. Before doing that, however, I will first establish the variations of which Suetonius is capable in the other instances of violent death.

The *Caligula* is a convenient starting point as it adheres most closely to the pattern of the *Julius* and *Domitian*. 'There were many (*plerique*),' Suetonius says first, 'who thought of assassinating him [Caligula] as he carried on in this crazy manner'.[311] Immediately after this statement, Suetonius relates the formation of the final conspiracy against Caligula and its participants (*Cal.* 50.1). The 'many' signals the groundswell of resentment that Caligula's behavior had prompted and mirrors Suetonius' presentation of contemporary feeling in the *Julius* and the *Domitian*. But whereas those two *Lives* include general dissatisfaction as the attendant of a conspiracy, Suetonius' focus in the *Caligula* is specifically on those who contemplated the emperor's murder. The distinction he draws is between those who were caught or 'awaiting an

[310] *Per haec terribilis cunctis et invisus, tandem oppressus est <…> amicorum libertorumque intimorum simul et uxoris* (*Dom*. 14.1).
[311] *Ita bacchantem atque grassantem non defuit plerisque animus adoriri* (*Cal*. 56.1). *Bacchor* is hapax in Suetonius; *grassor* is used once more of Caligula (34.1), and appears also at *Aug*.67.2, *Nero* 36.1, *Galba* 14.2, and *Vesp*. 6.2. See also Wardle (1994) 352: "*Ita* categorises what Suetonius has just described and provides the motive for the conspiracies which occupy this chapter."

opportunity' and those who succeeded.[312] As we shall see, this is because of the identity of the people involved in the final conspiracy, but for the moment it is enough to observe the repetition of the prevailing negative sentiment found in the *Julius* and the *Domitian*.

The *Galba* also comments on the emperor's unpopularity, but differs from the *Julius*, *Domitian*, and *Caligula* on the point of conspiracy. 'While Galba was disliked by practically everyone in the orders because of these deeds, he blazed with an extraordinary unpopularity (*vel praecipua*) amongst the soldiery'.[313] Suetonius clearly replicates in the *Galba* the general opprobrium of the *Lives* we have already considered. Absent, however, is the presence of a conspiracy, and Suetonius does not mention the part the soldiers will play in Galba's death at this point. That Galba's unpopularity was great enough to touch nearly every citizen at Rome, however, strengthens the impact of the 'extraordinary' unpopularity he had amongst the military. Whatever offense he had caused the rest of the population, in other words, it did not match the effect that he had on the soldiers. To emphasize that the biographer is making here, we should note Suetonius' difference with Plutarch. For the Greek biographer attempts to excuse Galba, saying that the emperor's unpopularity was not his fault, but was essentially a misunderstanding between himself and his subjects. Galba's policies, for example, meet with public disapproval because of mismanagement of them by Vinius: 'The old man was treated unjustly at first because Vinius handled things poorly, and then because he perverted or prevented things that the emperor himself had properly decided, for example, the punishment of Nero's former adherents'.[314]

The military also plays a prominent part in the *divisio* of the *Vitellius*, though it is less distinct than the *Galba*'s and the *divisio* itself represents the most unusual example of this section. 'In the eighth month of his reign, the armies of Moesia and Pannonia revolted from Vitellius, as did those of Judaea and Syria across the seas; all swore

[312] *Sed una <atque> altera conspiratione detecta, aliis per inopiam occasionis cunctantibus, duo consilium communicaverunt perfeceruntque, non sine conscientia potentissimorum libertorum praefectorumque praetori* (*Cal.* 56.1). See Wardle (1994) 352-353 on these would-be assassins.
[313] *Per haec prope universis ordinibus offensis vel praecipua flagrabat invidia apud milites* (*Galba* 16.1).
[314] Ὁ δὲ πρεσβύτης ἠδικεῖτο τὰ μὲν πρῶτα τοῦ Οὐινίου κακῶς διοικοῦντος, ἃ δὲ αὐτὸς ὀρθῶς προῃρεῖτο διαβάλλοντος ἢ κωλύοντος· οἷον ἦν τὸ περὶ τὰς κολάσεις τῶν Νερωνιανῶν (*Galba* 17.1).

allegiance to Vespasian, the former in his absence, the latter in person'.[315] The military revolt is an obvious sign of frustration with Vitellius, and the upcoming war naturally replaces the conspiracies encountered in most of the above *Lives*. Suetonius, however, at this point in the narrative omits any sign of the widespread, domestic dissatisfaction that characterizes the previous examples. The general pattern of contemporary displeasure with the emperor and the violent response is retained, but in order to understand why Suetonius presents the *Vitellius*' *divisio* (and the rest of the violent *Lives*') as he does, we need to consider briefly how each *Life* is arranged around its *divisio*.

Violent Deaths (Arrangement):
Vitellius, Galba, and Caligula
Domitian and Caesar

The Vitellian *divisio* focuses on the emperor's immediate problem, and the civil war that it portends prompts Suetonius' coverage of Vitellius' response. In contrast to the other *Lives* of this section, Suetonius does not expand on a theme of general disaffection or explain its roots. On the contrary, the biographer's task in the *Vitellius* is to explain the 'loyalty' of the emperor's subjects (*i.e.*, in Rome and his own army) in the wake of the disloyalty the *divisio* describes.

In order to retain the devotion and favor of 'the rest of the people' (*ceteri homines*), Vitellius' generosity has 'no limits'.[316] He holds a general levy and promises veterans' benefits to new recruits upon the successful issue of the upcoming conflict (*Vit.* 15.1). Vitellius attempts to abdicate three times. At each of these attempts Vitellius' supporters object to his intentions and their emperor relents (*Vit.* 15.2, 15.3, and 15.4). Soldiers (praetorians) are Vitellius' audience during his first attempt (*milites*; *Vit.* 15.2). The soldiers are joined by the people in the second instance (*milites ac*

[315] *Octavo imperii mense desciverunt ab eo exercitus Moesiarum atque Pannoniae, item ex transmarinis Iudaicus et Syriaticus, ac pars in absentis pars in praesentis Vespasiani verba iurarunt* (*Vit.* 15.1).
[316] *Ad retinendum ergo ceterorum hominum studium ac favorem nihil non publice privatimque nullo adhibito modo largitus est* (*Vit.* 15.1).

populus; *Vit.* 15.3), and in the third, 'some' people call out encouragement (*quidam*; *Vit.* 15.4). When the Flavians finally achieve victory, however, Vitellius' support evaporates and the Flavians advance with 'no one in the way (*nemine obvio*; *Vit.* 17.1). Many of those who had so recently been Vitellians line the streets to witness their former emperor's last moments with derision rather than sympathy or respect (*Vit.* 17.1-2). They fling 'refuse and mud' and 'shout insults'.[317]

Suetonius' three abdication scenes stand in contrast to the single attempt at abdication that Tacitus records.[318] This difference clearly indicates the emphasis the biographer places on these attempts. The account itself, though chronological, is highly compressed, and quickly covers the events of five or six months (from August or July to December; *Vit.* 15.1-17).[319] The compression further allows Suetonius to develop the rise and fall of Vitellius' support by means of the (extra) abdication scenes. As Suetonius chooses to present things, Vitellius' supporters object to his abdication on the basis of the emperor's 'limitless' generosity, since that generosity would benefit them only so long as he was emperor. Loyalty purchased in the wrong way, however, is not loyalty, and it should be noted that though Tacitus also mentions Vitellius' levy, he says nothing about the emperor's generosity at the time.[320] This makes clear the narrative choice that Suetonius has made, and by the end of the *Life*, the sentiment of the *divisio* has become general. Suetonius' account—by both the repeated abdication scenes and the chronological compression—creates the impression that Vitellius' popularity was never more than artificial. Suetonius' repetition of the abdication scenes, moreover, gives Vitellius opportunities that Tacitus does not. For on any of these occasions, Vitellius was free to give up what Vespasian was coming to take.

The remaining examples of this section are more straightforward. We can account for the conspiracy missing from Galba's *divisio* by Suetonius' general emphasis

---

[317] *quibusdam stercore et caeno incessentibus, aliis incendiarium et patinarium vociferantibus* (*Vit.* 17.2).
[318] Tac. *Hist.* 3.67.2-.3.70. For arguments that Suetonius' account is the correct one, see Fabia (1893) 157ff. and Gascou (1984) 273n.35. See Morgan (2006) 240-255 for the differences between the historians' and the biographer's acounts.
[319] For a discussion of historical compression, inaccuracies, and omissions, see Mooney (1939) 360-364, Shotter (1993) 184-188, and Venini (1977) 136-139.
[320] Tac. *Hist.* 3.58.1-2.

on the emperor's control. While a sense of public dissatisfaction is evident in the *divisio*, Suetonius' focus is Galba's 'especial unpopularity' amongst the soldiery.[321] The soldiers' objection to Galba centers on his refusal to pay them a donative. In response to the soldiers' demands, Galba said that it was his habit 'to draft his troops, not to buy them'.[322] Upon the revolt of the army of Upper Germany (*Galba* 16.2), Galba similarly miscalculates. Thinking that his age and, in particular, his childlessness were the source of the problem, Galba adopts Piso Frugi Licinianus.[323] At the adoption ceremony, however, 'even then there was no mention of a donative', and Suetonius himself comments that this oversight provided Otho 'an easier opportunity' to overthrow the elderly emperor.[324]

Here, then, is the announcement of the conspiracy absent from the *divisio*. We should note, however, that Suetonius' arrangement emphasizes Galba's responsibility. The *divisio* introduces the soldiery as Galba's primary weakness. The material that follows outlines the reasons for this and ends with Suetonius' own observation that Galba's failure to address the problem properly contributed to his downfall. When Galba is finally murdered by the soldiers who have sided with Otho (*Galba* 19.2), the chain of cause and effect comes to its logical conclusion. Galba's assassination—or Otho's success—is ultimately Galba's fault.

Both Tacitus and Plutarch provide useful comparanda for establishing Suetonius' narrative choice in the *Galba* and his emphasis on Galba's responsibility. Suetonius, as I have noted, points out that Galba's failure to pay the donative made things easier for Otho. Tacitus on the other hand, refers expressly to Otho's assassination of Galba as a 'most despicable act' (*flagitiosissimum*).[325] The historian's emphasis, in other words, is on the nature of the assassination, whereas Suetonius

---

[321] *Per haec prope universis ordinibus offensis vel praecipua flagrabat invidia apud milites* (*Galba* 16.1).
[322] *Nam cum in verba eius absentis iurantibus donativum grandius solito praepositi pronuntiassent, neque ratam rem habuit et subinde iactavit legere se militem, non emere consuesse* (*Galba* 16.1).
[323] *Quod ut nuntiatum est, despectui esse non tam senectam suam quam orbitatum ratus, Pisonem Frugi Licinianum…adoptavit* (*Galba* 17).
[324] *ne tunc quidem donativi ulla mentione facta. Quo faciliorem occasionem M. Salvio Othoni praebuit perficiendi conata intra sextum adoptionis diem* (*Galba* 17).
[325] *Duobus facinoribus, altero flagitiosissimo, altero egregio, tantundem apud posteros meruit bonae famae quantum malae* (*Hist.* 2.50).

emphasizes why it was able to occur. The biographer does not 'blame' Otho for the assassination of Galba, but rather Galba for having made himself vulnerable. Plutarch, on the other hand, also mentions the soldiers' desire for a donative, but softens the force of this by also adducing their discontent with Galba's disregard for Verginius Rufus and respect for Vindex (*Galba* 22.1-2). The Greek biographer does not, moreover, repeatedly raise the subject of the donative as Suetonius does. The Roman biographer's account is thus clearly constructed around a specific point of contention (donative) that the emperor fails to resolve properly.[326] Suetonius' presentation of Caligula's death similarly focuses on the dysfunctional relationship between the emperor and his assassins and the emperor's responsibility for what happens.

Caligula's *divisio*, as we have seen, provides a sense of general disaffection, but Suetonius' focus ends up on the men who murder the emperor. 'After one or two conspiracies had been found out,' says Suetonius, two men got together and accomplished the deed (*Cal.* 56.1). Caligula's awareness of these conspiracies, however, does not cause him to modify the behavior that led to the plots. Not only does he fail to change his behavior, he antagonizes his own (initially loyal) prefects, who realize that their emperor 'suspected and hated them'. Caligula even challenges the men with drawn sword to say that 'they thought him worthy of death'.[327] Afterwards, Caligula never ceased setting them against one another, as Hurley observes, "until they would have nothing more to do with him and left him to the conspirators. Their involvement was his fault, not theirs."[328] Cassius Chaerea, moreover, claimed the chief part in the conspiracy for himself because Caligula insulted him as 'soft and effeminate' and made

---

[326] As yet another example of Suetonius' narrative choice, we should also note that his version of Galba dies *desertus a suis* (*Galba* 19.2). Dio 64.6.3 says that Galba died in the presence of many senators and regular citizens. This is not to suggest that any of these people helped their emperor, but points up the details of Suetonius' version and the universal alienation his *divisio* suggests. Note also the absence of the loyal Sempronius Densus (cf., Dio 64.6.4-5; Plutarch *Galba* 26.4-5; Tac. *Hist*. 1.43.1). Suetonius even stands up for his interpretation, saying that it might seem 'surprising' that no one tried to help Galba (*Illud mirum admodum fuerit, neque praesentium quemquam opem imperatori ferre conatum*; *Galba* 20.1).

[327] *quod ipsi quoque etsi falso in quadam coniuratione quasi participes nominati, suspectos tamen se et invisos sentiebant. Nam et statim seductis magnam fecit invidiam destricto gladio affirmans sponte se periturum, si et illis morte dignus videretur, nec cessavit ex eo criminari alterum alteri atque inter se omnis committere* (*Cal*. 56.1).

[328] Hurley (1993) 199-200. The citation should be qualified by the understanding that these men were complicit, not directly involved, as Hurley makes clear earlier in her comments.

rude gestures towards him (*Cal.* 56.2). As Hurley's observation suggests, then, Caligula played a large part in his own death and, to a great extent, the conspiracy was his fault.

The *Domitian* follows the pattern of the *Caligula*. The broad expanse of unpopularity Domitian's *divisio* expresses narrows to a more intimate setting, in which Suetonius focuses on the assassins. After this *divisio*, Suetonius notes that Domitian knew the exact year, day, hour, and even manner of his death (*Dom.* 14.1), and that this knowledge caused Domitian to be 'always fearful and uneasy beyond reason at even the least suspicions'.[329] Domitian's attitude does not, in other words, lend itself to improving his relationships with those around him, and Suetonius later observes that Domitian executed his secretary Epaphroditus to demonstrate to his household that 'the murder of a patron must never be attempted, even if for a good reason'.[330] If Domitian's reasoning behind this execution were not unsound enough, Suetonius then mentions that Domitian killed his cousin Flavius Clemens 'suddenly and for the most untenable of suspicions'.[331] Suetonius concludes with the statement that 'by this act in particular, Domitian hastened his own death'.[332] Domitian's agency is plain enough in the biographer's personal observation, and we need only add that the intimacy of the *divisio* that introduces Domitian's death is accounted for by the closeness of the relationships the emperor terminates. The people who kill Domitian are the ones whom he threatens.

Caesar represents our final example. After the *divisio* that describes the union of several conspiracies into one and the public feeling against the dictator, Suetonius expands on the general mood at the time. The biographer notes a variety of statements that were current in both writing and speech (*Jul.* 80.2-3). Some, for example, wrote on the base of Lucius Brutus' statue, 'I wish that you were still alive'.[333] After this account, Suetonius briefly recounts the composition of the conspiracy and its plans (*Jul.* 80.4).

---

[329] *Quare pavidus semper atque anxius minimis etiam suspicionibus praeter modum commovebatur* (*Dom*. 14.2).
[330] *Utque domesticis persuaderet, ne bono quidem exemplo aud*[*i*[*endam esse patroni necem, Epaphroditum a libellis capitali poena condemnavit, quod post destitutionem Nero in adipiscenda morte manu eius adiutus existimabatur* (*Dom*. 14.4).
[331] *Denique Flavium Clementem patruelem suum…repente ex tenuissima suspicione tantum non in ipso eius consulatu interemit* (*Dom*. 15.1).
[332] *Quo maxime facto maturavit sibi exitium* (*Dom*. 15.1).
[333] *Subscripsere quidam Luci Bruti statuae*: *utinam viveres*! (*Jul*. 80.3).

Suetonius expressly locates the conspirators' breaking point immediately before the *divisio*. Upon learning that Lucius Cotta intended to propose that Caesar be named *rex*, the conspirators hastened their plans so 'they would not have to approve this proposal'.[334] Suetonius' presents Cotta's plan as the final example of Caesar's arrogance (*Jul.* 76-80.1). The arrogance itself is presented as part of the programmatic *divisio* discussed in **Chapter 3**, in which Suetonius comments that 'the rest of Caesar's deeds and words nevertheless led people to think that he had abused his power and had been justly murdered'.[335]

Suetonius' account of the dictator's last day, moreover, can be read as a continuation on the theme of Caesar's arrogance. Before venturing forth that day, Caesar hesitates for a long time (*cunctatus diu*). Decimus Brutus lures him out, saying that the senate has been awaiting the dictator 'already for a long time' (*iam dudum*). When a note disclosing the conspiracy is passed to him, Caesar puts it away without reading it. Several sacrifices are then made without favorable results, but Caesar makes light of the situation, dismissing Spurinna the soothsayer's earlier warnings about the Ides of March (*Jul.* 81.4). That Caesar kept the senators waiting and had no regard for the ill omens that preceded his fatal meeting might be taken as a sign of his failure to correct the arrogant behavior that had so aggravated his colleagues. Not only, then, did Caesar's arrogance provoke the conspirators, it even aided and justified their designs.

The different emphasis found in Plutarch's account of Caesar's death will make Suetonius' focus on Caesar's arrogant behavior more apparent. For Plutarch emphasizes Caesar's mistaken trust in his assassins. The Greek biographer notes that, in their disaffection, people began to place their hopes on Marcus Brutus, but that Brutus himself felt indebted to Caesar (*Caesar* 62.1-2). When warned about Brutus' possible ambitions, moreover, Plutarch says that Caesar 'disregarded' these claims, saying that Brutus would not become 'ungrateful wretch' just so supplant him.[336]

---

[334] *Quae causa coniuratis maturandi fuit destinata negotia, ne assentiri necesse est* (*Jul.* 80.1).
[335] *Praegravant tamen cetera facta dictaque eius, ut et abusus dominatione et iure caesus existimetur* (*Jul.* 76.1).
[336] καί ποτε καὶ διαβαλλόντων τινῶν τὸν ἄνδρα, πραττομένης ἤδη τῆς συνωμοσίας, οὐ προσέσχεν, ἀλλὰ τοῦ μένης

Shortly after this, Plutarch then notes Decimus Brutus' role in the assassination, a man whom Caesar 'so trusted that he named him his second heir.'[337] Perhaps the most significant difference between the two biographers' accounts enters with the note disclosing the conspiracy that Caesar receives. Suetonius' Caesar, as I have noted, simply files it away for later reading. Plutarch, however, says that Caesar attempted to read the note 'many times', but was prevented from doing so by all the people around him.[338] Though Plutarch, like Suetonius, notes contemporary dissatisfaction with Caesar, his account does not reinforce the source of that dissatisfaction in the events leading to the dictator's death. He instead emphasizes the close relationship Caesar had with his assassins, and the arrogant behavior of Suetonius' Caesar becomes more apparent.

In order to avoid belaboring the point about Caesar's and the emperors' responsibility for the deaths that they receive, let me rephrase the argument with a term familiar to rest of this dissertation. The *divisiones* that introduce the emperors' deaths present situations that are not necessarily fixed. Each of the men in this section has some choice in Suetonius' presentation of their lives. Caesar could have acted with some humility and Domitian could have fostered relationships instead of ending them. Caligula, too, could have improved his relationships with certain people instead of exacerbating them. Galba could have offered his soldiers the donative that Suetonius emphasizes, and Vitellius could have abdicated on any of the three occasions the biographer affords him. In this regard, the deaths themselves are not really Suetonius' point. They are simply one more example of the question that he is always asking, namely, what the emperor does.

ἤδη τῆς συνωμοσίας, οὐ προσέσχεν, ἀλλὰ τοῦ σώματος τῇ χειρὶ θιγὼν ἔφη πρὸς τοὺς διαβάλλοντας· ἀναμενεῖ τοῦτο τὸ δέρμα Βροῦτος, ὡς ἄξιον μὲν ὄντα τῆς ἀρχῆς δι' ἀρετήν, διὰ δὲ τὴν ἀρετὴν οὐκ ἂν ἀχάριστον καὶ πονηρὸν γενόμενον (*Caes*. 62.6-7).

[337] Ἐν δὲ τούτῳ Δέκιμος Βροῦτος ἐπίκλησιν Ἀλβῖνος, πιστευόμενος μὲν ὑπὸ Καίσαρος, ὥστε καὶ δεύτερος ὑπ' αὐτοῦ κληρονόμος γεγράφθαι (*Caes*. 64.1).

[338] ὁρῶν δὲ τὸν Καίσαρα τῶν βιβλιδίων ἕκαστον δεχόμενον καὶ παραδιδόντα τοῖς περὶ αὐτὸν ὑπηρέταις, ἐγγὺς σφόδρα προσελθών, τοῦτ' ἔφη Καῖσαρ ἀνάγνωθι μόνος καὶ ταχέως· γέγραπται γὰρ ὑπὲρ πραγμάτων μεγάλων καὶ σοὶ διαφερόντων. δεξάμενος οὖν ὁ Καῖσαρ, ἀναγνῶναι μὲν ὑπὸ πλήθους τῶν ἐντυγχανόντων ἐκωλύθη, καίπερ ὁρμήσας πολλάκις, ἐν δὲ τῇ χειρὶ κατέχων καὶ φυλάττων μόνον ἐκεῖνο παρῆλθεν εἰς τὴν σύγκλητον (*Caes*. 65.2-4).

Suicides (*Divisio*): Nero and Otho

Suicide is obviously a deliberate act, but in the *Nero* and the *Otho* we shall find that Suetonius explores the question of whether the emperor's suicide is voluntary or, in a way, forced. That is to say, Suetonius emphasizes the factors that led each emperor to self-destruction and we should ask how those factors affect our assessment of the emperor's final act. In both *Lives*, the *divisiones* that introduce each emperor's death are again important to understanding Suetonius' approach.

As Bradley has observed, the Neronian *divisio* introduces the emperor's fall over a span of ten chapters (*Nero* 40-50).[339] More precisely, and much like the Vitellian *divisio*, Nero's *divisio* announces the end of the emperor's reign rather than his death as such. 'Having endured such a *princeps* for nearly fourteen years,' it says, 'the world (*terrarum orbis*) finally deserted Nero; the Gauls started it, with Julius Vindex, governor of the province at the time, as their leader'.[340] Like the *divisiones* we have already seen, Nero's clearly states the displeasure he had aroused. It encompassed the entire world. The *divisio* provides only this information and the mention of the Gauls under Vindex. As we shall see, Suetonius isolates precisely these two bits of information to set up his demonstration of what happens to Nero and how Nero responds to it in the events leading to his suicide.

Suetonius is more specific in Otho's *divisio*. 'Otho immediately seized upon the impulse to die, more from a sense of shame (as many think) that he should continue to assert a claim to power at such a high cost of matériel and men, than from any desperation or mistrust of his troops'.[341] Any sense that Otho had stirred the people against him is absent from the *divisio*. Indeed, the lack of mistrust between Otho and his troops indicates the latter's loyalty. The content of the *divisio* even seems to suggest

[339] Bradley (1978) 240ff.
[340] *Talem principem paulo minus quattuordecim annos perpessus terrarum orbis tandem destituit, initium facientibus Gallis duce Iulio Vindice, qui tum eam provinciam pro praetore optinebat* (*Nero* 40.1).
[341] *Ac statim moriendi impetum cepit, ut multi nec frustra opinantur, magis pudore, ne tanto rerum hominumque periculo dominationemque sibi asserere perseveraret, quam desperatione ulla aut diffidentia copiarum* (*Otho* 9.3).

a certain nobility of intention. Having articulated Otho's reasons for committing suicide, Suetonius has little need to belabor that aspect of the emperor's decision. Instead, the material that follows the *divisio* will explore the question of whether or not Otho made a timely or an appropriate decision.

In sum, though both Nero and Otho choose suicide, Suetonius' *divisiones* are notably different. This difference in introduction anticipates the difference in direction Suetonius will follow in the respective *Lives*. Despite the 'service' that both emperors do the state in removing themselves, it will be difficult to argue that Suetonius ultimately approves of either man once we have examined the material that follows the *divisiones*.

Suicides (Arrangement): Nero and Otho

Bradley has argued that Suetonius' account of Nero's fall after the *divisio* alternates between chronological narrative and sections arranged by rubric, and he discerns a pattern in the biographer's narrative that offers a useful point from which to begin a discussion of the biographer's purpose.[342] The pattern is bad news—plans—actions—reactions. The important question for us is how this pattern helps Suetonius to achieve his goals.[343]

After Suetonius reports the news of Vindex's uprising in the *divisio*, the biographer prefaces Nero's reaction to the event with the report that Nero had been warned by astrologers that this would happen one day (*Nero* 40.2-3). Nero rationalized this prophecy away, and felt 'confident' that would he reach old age and enjoy 'continual and extraordinary' good luck (*Nero* 40.4). This attitude persists in Nero's reaction to Vindex's revolt. Nero took the news 'calmly' and 'without concern', and 'for

[342] Bradley (1978) 241. The extent to which Bradley's claim for the alternation between chronological narrative and sections arranged by rubric is correct is perhaps debatable. The general pattern that he observes, however, is sufficiently clear, and we need not concern ourselves with the question of chronology/rubric here.
[343] Other scholars have also found this section of text intriguing. Townend (1967) 93 judges them "perhaps the most succesful piece of continuous narrative in the *Caesares*." See also Lounsbury (1991) 3767-3768 for a brief, but very involved, treatment.

eight whole days' did nothing, but 'covered over the matter with silence' as he whiled away his time at Naples.[344] His actions and response to the revolt, in other words, amounted to little more than pretending the revolt did not exist. After repeated updates about the revolt, Nero finally hastened back to Rome 'very frightened', but this fear still did not prompt him to action. Instead, he held an audience to go over the finer points of his new water-organs (*Nero* 41.2). While his decision to return to Rome may have been a step in the right direction, Nero's failure to take any action and respond directly to the revolt upon arrival make it seem as if he could have done just as well to remain at Naples. He is effectively doing nothing.

The next instance of Bradley's pattern begins with Nero's successor Galba and the revolt of the Spanish provinces under his control (*Nero* 42.1). At this, Nero fainted and lamented his fate. As Suetonius observes, however, Nero still 'did not give up or renounce any of his usual extravagance and idleness', and the biographer's comment itself offers a clear analysis of Nero's continued failure to deal with his problems in a practical way.[345] Suetonius next reports the 'horrible' things that Nero was thought to have contemplated in response to Galba's uprising, including poisoning the senate (*Nero* 43.1).[346] Nero abandoned these plans out of 'hopelessness at being able to accomplish them' and assumed the fasces. His intention was to go to Gaul and present himself before the mutinous armies—to weep—after which there would be much singing and rejoicing (*Nero* 43.2). Nero's preparations for this 'campaign' aroused the public's 'hostility' (*invidia*), particularly on the issue of his alleged grain profiteering,[347] and Suetonius spends the remainder of this second instance recounting Nero's growing fear (*Nero* 45-46). This crescendo of fear perhaps parallels the swelling of the uprising against the emperor, but I need only emphasize again that Nero himself did nothing to check the revolt and to prevent things from reaching such a point.

---

[344] *Denique per octo continuos dies non rescribere cuiquam, non mandare quid aut praecipere conatus rem silentio oblit*[*t*]*eravit* (*Nero* 40.4).
[345] *Nec eo setius quicquam ex consuetudine luxus atque desidiae omisit vel inminuit* (*Nero* 42.2).
[346] Morgan (2000) 212-213 has argued that these plans are in chronological sequence with Galba's revolt, rather than the shift between chronology and rubric that Bradley prefers.
[347] See Morgan (2000) 210-222 on this episode.

The third instance thus begins with the defection of 'the rest of the armies'.[348] Nero threw a temper tantrum in response—breaking his two favorite drinking cups—and then tried to make his escape with some tribunes and centurions of the guard (*Nero* 47.1). Finding no support for this, Nero contemplated abdication (*Nero* 47.2), but resolved to flee to the villa of his freedman Phaon after finding himself all but abandoned by his household (*Nero* 47.3-48.1). Nero is thus reduced to fleeing from a situation that his inaction has allowed to evolve beyond his control.

At the villa, Nero receives word that the senate has declared him an 'enemy of the state' (*hostis*) and decides, at the urging of his associates to kill himself (*Nero* 49.2). The setting, as described by Suetonius, has recently been discussed by Champlin and his interpretation provides us with a useful perspective point from which to interpret Suetonius' presentation of Nero's death. As the preparations for Nero's burial are being undertaken, Nero himself weeps, repeatedly saying, *Qualis artifex pereo* (*Nero* 49.1). Champlin focuses on Nero as the foreman of his own gravesite: the pitiful mantra draws "attention to the contrast between the great artist [Nero] once was and the pitiful artisan he has become."[349] Champlin's arguments are predicated on his reconstruction of Nero's self-identity. For him, and he may well be right, Nero thought himself an artist.

Suetonius, however, is writing the *Life* of someone who is supposed to be *princeps*, not *artifex*, and the pattern that Bradley discerns in the fatal sections of the *Nero* produces yet another pattern. For Nero is consistently ineffective throughout all of the situations Suetonius describes, and is even negligent. His initial proposals are generally weak or ludicrous (*e.g.*, poisoning the senate), but the course he adopts is no better (going to weep before the Gallic armies). In the early going, indeed, Nero ignores his problems, since they can only detract from his continued enjoyment of the behavior patterns that have precipitated the crisis. Nero, in other words, does not play the part of *princeps* properly, making little attempt to manage the affairs of the empire, and his suicide is forced upon him by historical circumstances largely of his own making.

---

[348] *Nuntiata interim etiam ceterorum exercituum defectione litteras prandenti sibi redditas concerpsit* (*Nero* 47.1).
[349] Champlin (2003) 51.

Unlike Nero, Otho is not driven to suicide. As Otho's *divisio* clearly states, the emperor made this decision entirely of his own volition. The question is whether or not this decision was timely. Despite the apparent nobility of Otho's motivation—that he did not want to prolong the war against Vitellius at the expense of more lives—Suetonius' answer to this question appears to be negative or, at best, equivocal.

Suetonius follows the *divisio* with an analysis of the situation on the ground after the Othonians' defeat at Betriacum. Otho had 'fresh' reserves on hand with more on the way and 'even the defeated troops were not so despondent that they would not have risked avenging their disgrace or, for that matter, any danger even unaccompanied'.[350] After this, Suetonius returns to Otho's perspective with evidence provided by the biographer's own father Suetonius Laetus. Laetus used to say that Otho had hated civil war even before becoming emperor (*privatus*) and that he would not have assassinated Galba 'if he were not confident that he could complete the affair without war' (*Otho* 10.1). Though Suetonius does not say so, Otho's suicide naturally left Rome to Vitellius—a demonstrably bad emperor—and did not prevent the continuation of the civil wars. To the extent that either of these ideas lurks in the background of the *Otho*, Suetonius may be commenting on the validity of Otho's stance.

There is another significant factor, however. At the start of the hostilities against Vitellius, Suetonius says that Otho began his expedition 'too hastily'.[351] In drawing up his battle plans, Otho acted with 'similar rashness' (*similis temeritas*) and disregarded his advisers (*Otho* 9.1). Otho's decision to commit suicide then comes 'immediately' (*statim*) after his defeat at Betriacum (*Otho* 9.3). The consistency of Otho's behavior as Suetonius presents it is apparent enough. Rash behavior, however, is not commendable, and even with the reasons Otho had for deciding to commit suicide, the reader is forced to ask whether it represents a genuinely measured choice. Not only did Suetonius' Otho leave Rome to Vitellius, he did it sooner than he had to.

---

[350] *quippe residuis integrisque etiam nunc quas secum ad secundos casus detinuerat, et supervenientibus aliis e Dalmatia Pannoniaque et Moesia, ne victis quidem adeo afflictis ut non in ultionem ignominiae quidvis discriminis ultro et vel solae subirent* (*Otho* 9.3).

[351] *Expeditionem autem inpigre atque etiam praepropere incohavit, nulla ne religionum quidem cura, sed motis necdum conditis ancilibus, quod antiquitus infaustum habetur, et die, quo cultores deum Matris lamentari et plangere incipiunt, praeterea adversissmis auspiciis* (*Otho* 8.3).

Comparison with Tacitus' characterization of Otho's suicide on this point is instructive. The historian presents Otho's decision in the context of a debate, in which Plotius Firmus, prefect of the praetorian guard, urges his emperor not to give up (Tac. *Hist.* 2.46). Otho himself responds with a speech that reflects a cool deliberation. 'Others', he said, 'may have held power longer, but no one can have left it so bravely'.[352] Tacitus' Otho, then, appears to be in control, and in this context, Suetonius' emphasis on Otho's haste suggests that the biographer is calling into question Otho's fitness to be *princeps.* For this haste suggests that Otho is not control (at least of himself), and a rash decision is not necessarily an 'executive' one.

It is difficult to argue, then, that Suetonius approves of either of the *Caesares*' two suicides. The *Nero* is the more straightforward of the two cases. Suetonius clearly states the world's dissatisfaction with its emperor and expressly comments that even a 'global' revolt could not prompt Nero to depart from his slothful extravagance. It is not simply that Nero kills himself, but that his management of affairs robs him of any other choice. It is only in the events that precede this final act that Nero can exercise a real choice. In that sense his suicide does not differ significantly from any of the assassinations we have already discussed. Nero's suicide is ultimately the result of the disaffection of his subjects.

The *Otho* is more complicated. Plutarch's account, in contrast to Suetonius', gives practical reasons for Otho's suicide. At Betriacum, the Greek biographer reports the desertion of Othonian troops to the side of Vitellius (*Otho* 13.6-7). Plutarch's Otho, in other words, lacks the devotion that Suetonius' enjoys. Consider, for example, the soldier who commits suicide as proof of his word and of his devotion to Otho in Suetonius' account. (*Otho* 10.1). Insofar as Suetonius' Otho has no cause to suspect the loyalty of his supporters, this difference between the Greek and Roman biographers emphasizes the rashness found in the latter. There is no indication in Suetonius' account, moreover, that Otho's death is related to dissatisfaction with his behavior in any way, and Tacitus' account again provides a useful perspective. The historian draws

[352] *Alii diutius imperium tenuerint, nemo tam fortiter reliquerit* (Tac. *Hist.* 2.47).

a distinction between Otho's coup and Otho's suicide: 'By two acts, the one most despicable, the other noble, Otho earned about as much of good reputation as a bad one'.[353] The good does not necessarily cancel the bad in Tacitus' estimation. Or, perhaps better, the bad undercuts the good and the historian's stance towards the emperor appears to be equivocal. Suetonius, as I have suggested, is at least as equivocal, but the narrative choice he has made to emphasize Otho's rashness introduces a different set of factors into his assessment. For while Suetonius, like Tacitus, acknowledges the merits of Otho's suicide, he does not explore the contrast between murder and suicide that interests the historian. Instead, he questions the haste with which the emperor resolved upon this solution. The emperor's rash behavior, in other words, undercuts the merits of his suicide in the biographer's account, and as I have argued, Suetonius has chosen this approach in order to demonstrate that Otho is not fully in control of the situation.

Strange Deaths (*Divisio*): Tiberius and Claudius

The *Lives* of this section are not so closely related as my categorization might suggest. Tiberius' death is strange for its lack of violence, and Claudius' death is unusual for the intimate confines within which it occurs. Though Suetonius approves of neither emperor, their *Lives* are placed here mostly for convenience and I will not speak of them as a pair. Suetonius does, however, follow the same general process from *divisio* to death that has already been observed in both *Lives* and I will accordingly adopt the same approach as before.

In the Tiberian *divisio*, Suetonius focuses on four qualities: 'There are many signs of not only how hated and abominable Tiberius was at this time, but also that he was

[353] *Duobus facinoribus, altero flagitiosissimo, altero egregio, tantundem apud posteros meruit bonae famae quantum male* (Tac. *Hist*. 2.50). Note also that Tacitus approves of Otho's motives for suicide: *ut nemo dubitet potuisse renovari bellum atrox, lugubre, incertum victis et victoribus* (Tac. *Hist*. 2.46). Suetonius mentions the motives, provides support for their authenticity, but does not comment on them in the way that Tacitus does.

extremely fearful and even subject to insults'.[354] The latter two qualities perhaps follow naturally from the former two. As with several of the *divisiones* we have already examined, Tiberius' clearly states the negative sentiment that attended the end of his reign. In place of assassinations or revolts, Suetonius notes qualities that are related to them. Tiberius' fear obviously suggests a concern about his safety, and the insults perhaps reflect others' desire give Tiberius solid grounds for his fears. These overtones of violence, as we shall see, contribute to Suetonius' attempt to demonstrate that Tiberius receives a peaceful death he does not quite deserve.

The Claudian *divisio* is somewhat similar to the Caligulan, in that Suetonius' concern is to emphasize the identity of the persons involved in the emperor's death. 'Near the end of his life,' Suetonius says, 'Claudius betrayed certain, clear signs of regret for his marriage to Agrippina and for his adoption of Nero'.[355] As in the *Otho*, there is no indication of widespread discontent with the emperor in this *divisio*, and there is in fact no *divisio* in the *Claudius* that suggests such a thing. Suetonius' emphasis is on Claudius' family or, more generally, his intimate circle. For these are the people who will kill him.

Suetonius' execution in these *divisiones* is thus generally consistent with his method in the *Lives* we have already discussed. Though Tiberius is not murdered, Suetonius sets up his *divisio* in a way that mimics those of the emperors who die violently in order to indicate that Tiberius probably should have been murdered. The Claudian *divisio*, on the other hand, follows the lead of Caligula's by its focus on the emperor's murderers. For Tiberius, the question is mostly one of arrangement and how Suetonius deals with the issue of what it 'up to' the emperor when the emperor himself escapes accountability. For Claudius, we need to ask what conclusion Suetonius reaches about the circumstances of his death given that the only dissatisfaction the Claudian *divisio* expresses is that of the emperor himself and not any of his subjects.

---

[354] *Quam inter haec non modo invisus ac detestabilis, sed praetrepidus quoque atque etiam contumeliis obnoxius vixerit, multa indicia sunt* (*Tib*. 63.1).
[355] *Sub exitu vitae signa quaedam nec obscura paenitentis de matrimonio Agrippinae deque Neronis adoptione dederat* (*Claud*. 43).

Strange Deaths (Arrangement): Claudius and Tiberius

Prior to the *divisio* that introduces Claudius' death, Suetonius comments twice that Claudius was the tool of his freedmen and wives. The first time, he says that Claudius 'managed these and other things, and in fact pretty much his entire principate, according to the judgment of his wives and freedmen rather than his own'.[356] And in the second instance, Suetonius notes that Claudius was 'slavishly bound to his freedmen and his wives, and behaved like a servant (*minister*) rather than a *princeps*'.[357] Though Dio seems generally to agree with Suetonius' assessment of Claudius on this point, Hurley has observed that Seneca faults Claudius alone for some of the things that Suetonius claims the emperor did as his freedmen and wives' *minister*.[358] Suetonius' narrative choice thus stresses the importance of the signs of Claudius' regrets for his marriage to Agrippina and adoption of her son that the *divisio* introduces. They represent a deviation from Claudius' normal behavior, and Suetonius next includes the signs themselves. Claudius stated it had been his fate to have marriages that were 'all unchaste, but not unpunished' (*omnia impudica*, *sed non impunita matrimonia*; *Claud.* 43), and later treated his biological son Britannicus with affection and promised to correct the wrong he had done him (*Claud.* 43).

After Britannicus, Suetonius reports that 'not much later, Claudius even changed his will and stamped it with the seals of all the magistrates. Before he could proceed further, however, he was cut off by Agrippina'.[359] While Suetonius says only that Claudius changed his will and does not reveal the actual changes, the progression of the biographer's account indicates that Agrippina thought that the changes would

---

[356] *Sed et haec et cetera totumque adeo ex parte magna principatum non tam suo quam uxorum libertorumque arbitrio administravit, talis ubique plerumque, qualem esse eum aut expediret illis aut liberet* (*Claud*. 25.5).
[357] *His, ut dixi, uxoribusque addictus, non principem* [*se*], *sed ministrum egit, compendio cuiusque horum vel etiam studio aut libidine honores exercitus impunitates supplica largitus est, et quidem insciens plerumque et ignarus* (*Claud*. 29.1).
[358] Hurley (2001) 196; cf., Dio 60.14.2 and 60.15.1; Seneca *Apoc*. 11.1 and 11.5.
[359] *Non multoque post testamentum etiam conscripsit ac signis omnium magistratuum obsignavit. Prius igitur quam ultra progrederetur, praeventus est ab Agrippina, quam praeter haec conscientia quoque nec minus delatores multorum criminum arguebant* (*Claud*. 44.1).

disadvantage her and her son Nero. The pro-Britannicus sentiment and the veiled threat to his wife that Claudius expresses are, in other words, what lead Agrippina both to think that Claudius is about to undercut her and so to murder him.[360]

Claudius' death, then, is a private or family matter. Neither the *divisio* nor any other part of the *Life* makes mention of widespread contemporary feelings against the emperor. Suetonius' earlier comments on the influence of Claudius' wives and freedman on the emperor himself, however, clarify the approach that Suetonius adopts in the *divisio* that introduces the emperor's death, and even explain the death itself. While Claudius has the right idea when he voices his regrets and attempts to correct the situation he has countenanced, the pattern of undue influence his intimates enjoy over him anticipates the failure of his attempts to exercise the control he should have exercised much earlier. Though Claudius is not the universally hated emperor that Tiberius or any number of the other Caesars are, his death is still 'up to' him and ultimately Suetonius does not approve. For Claudius the *minister* or servant of his household never manages to become its *princeps*.

For Tiberius, the path from opprobrium to violent death would be an easy one to understand were it not for history. Tiberius was not, after all, assassinated. The *divisio*, as I have noted, mimics the approach that Suetonius normally takes for the emperors who are murdered. After this statement of Tiberius' reputation amongst his contemporaries and the fear and insults he suffered as a result, Suetonius enumerates several examples of the emperor's deeds that were done out of fear (*e.g.*, a prohibition on the use of soothsayers in secret and without witnesses, *Tib.* 63.1; the transport of his exiled daughter-in-law and grandchildren in chains, *Tib.* 64; and the destruction of Sejanus, *Tib.* 65). These anecdotes are followed by examples of the insults hurled at Tiberius, the last of which is a letter from the Parthian king Artabanus that urges Tiberius 'to satisfy the powerful and completely justified hatred of the citizenry by a

[360] Hurley (2001) 233 has argued that "these anecdotes occur in the context of private moments, and so it is legitmate to raise doubts about their authenticity." This may well be correct, but we must also exercise caution in how we approach the question of Suetonius' veracity. Because Suetonius does not describe the contents of Claudius' new will, the progression of the biographer's account does not make sense unless the anecdotes are 'true'. For Agrippina would have little reason to kill her husband if the signs of Claudius' regret were apocryphal.

voluntary death'.[361] The progression from the *divisio* to Artabanus' letter makes the letter seem almost a response to the *divisio*. Since no one can get to Tiberius, perhaps the emperor would do Rome the favor of killing himself.

Artabanus' letter prompts Suetonius to bring up a much earlier letter of Tiberius' own.[362] In this letter and a subsequent speech, both addressed to the senate, Tiberius expresses doubts about the future stability of his *mores* and *animus*, and urges the senate to beware the possibility that he 'could be changed by some random chance' (*Tib*. 67.3).[363] As the various insults and Artabanus' letter have already made clear, however, the maintenance of the status quo is precisely what no one wants. People do not want Tiberius to remain the same and the substance of his letter in this context almost seems a promise that things will not improve so long as he is the one in control. When Tiberius is taken fatally ill at Astura, moreover, 'partly from a lack of self-control and partly as a result of his dissimulation, he did not give up anything of his daily routine, not even his banquets and the rest of his pleasures'.[364]

Tiberius finally succumbs to his illness at the villa of Lucullus (*Tib*. 73.1), and brief speculation about the actual manner of his death follows. Some say that Caligula poisoned him; others that he was starved or that he was smothered; and finally that he collapsed alone beside his bed and died (*Tib*. 73.2). Given the emperor's unpopularity, this speculation that some third party might have murdered Tiberius when he was at his weakest makes sense, but Suetonius stops short of endorsing any of the options. The idea that Tiberius would have taken Artabanus' advice just to pacify his subjects, on the other hand, is clearly absurd, and his refusal to alter his habits even for his own

---

[361] *Quin et Artabani Parthorum regis laceratus est litteris parricidia et caedes et ignaviam et luxuriam obicientis monentisque, ut voluntaria morte maximo iustissimoque civium odio quam primum satis faceret* (*Tib*. 66). Note that Tacitus *Ann*. 6.31.1 says only that the king scorned the emperor: *senectutem Tiberii ut intermem despiciens.*

[362] Suetonius' placement of the letter here is likely a narrative choice, as Tacitus introduces the letter at an earlier date (cf., *Ann*. 6.6.1).

[363] Levick (1978) 96ff., detects comic overtones in Tiberius' letter and argues that its message was not one of self-doubt, but of annoyance with the senate. The point of the language, according to Levick, is two-fold. It allows Tiberius to express his dissatisfaction in a way that pillows the overall impact. At the same time, to the extent that the senators are uncertain how to understand the remark and so reply, they are 'put in their place.' This line of argument is not unreasonable, and it is possible that both Suetonius and Tacitus (cf., *Ann*. 6.6) have misunderstood their source. It does not, however, change the way they used the letter.

[364] *Sustenavit tamen aliquamdiu, quamvis Misenum usque devectus nihil ex ordine cotidiano praetermitteret, ne convivia quidem qut ceteras voluptates partim intemperantia partim dissimulatione* (*Tib*. 72.3).

benefit when ill indicates that any relief was unlikely ever to happen. All this, however, is still clearly under Tiberius' control. The *divisio* that introduces Tiberius' end thus reflects the frustration of his subjects in their inability to do any more to their emperor than insult (and frighten) him. If only, they must have thought, Tiberius suffered from the same impotence when it came to his power over them. Suetonius' presentation of Tiberius, then, is perhaps that of the modern 'evil genius'. Fully capable of influencing everything around him for good or for ill, Tiberius manages to evade the lethal fallout that his decisions ought to have prompted.

Good Deaths (*Divisio*): Augustus, Vespasian, and Titus

The final group in our discussion consists of the three 'good' emperors. Perhaps because of their virtue, the *divisiones* that introduce their deaths may seem relatively dry or, at least, uneventful. Titus' *divisio* is the most obvious candidate for examination for the overt judgment that it expresses, but we should not overlook Augustus and Vespasian's *divisiones* for that reason. Suetonius, as it turns out, proceeds in both dynasts' *Lives* in ways that are consistent with his approach in the *Lives* of the bad emperors.

Suetonius introduces Augustus' death matter-of-factly. 'His death, of which I will speak next, as well as his deification after death, were known in advance by the clearest signs'.[365] While the unpopularity that characterizes many of the *divisiones* we have discussed is naturally absent from Augustus', it is worth noting that Suetonius substitutes the first *princeps*' deification in its place.[366] The substitution is significant for the consistency that it demonstrates in the *Caesares.* Suetonius, in other words, is as ready to reward the good as he is to criticize the bad. The introduction of Vespasian's death, on the other hand, may appear quite reserved at first: 'In his ninth consulship,

[365] *Mors quoque eius, de qua dehinc dicam, divinitasque post mortem evidentissimis ostentis praecognita est* (*Aug*. 97.1).
[366] The deification of Caesar, Claudius, Vespasian, and Titus are not relevant here insofar as Suetonius does not mention their ascendancy in a *divisio* akin to the one here in the *Augustus.*

after he had contracted a slight fever and immediately returned to Rome, he went to Cutiliae and the countryside of Reate, where he normally spent his summers.'[367] Absent again is any sign of public hostility, but also missing is any sentiment. Instead, Suetonius brings up a point that we have seen in other *Lives*. Taken ill, Vespasian does not depart from his routine, but persists in it, taking his regular seasonal holiday. In previous examples, for instance, Nero or Tiberius, Suetonius judged this failure to adapt negatively. The question in the *Vespasian*, then, is how the biographer can portray the emperor positively in this particular context.

The *Titus*, as I have said, contains a clear judgment on the emperor. Titus, Suetonius says, 'was cut off by death in the meantime, at greater expense to humanity than to himself'.[368] The judgment is apparent enough, but is unusual in this group. Neither the *Augustus* nor the *Vespasian* contains such a statement. Titus' *divisio* seems almost the 'good' equivalent of one of Suetonius' programmatic statements about the bad emperors. The difficulty with this *divisio* is its calculation. As we shall see below, Titus laments his own death, and we need to ask how Suetonius goes about properly 'burying' an emperor who does not himself believe that his death is fair.

Before moving on, let me briefly reiterate the regularity of Suetonius' approach in the above *divisiones*. Good emperors do not get special treatment for their virtue and Suetonius asks the same questions of them that he does of the others. The general pattern of the good emperors' *divisiones* thus generally follows what we have already observed in the *Lives* of the bad emperors. And Suetonius likewise retains the balance between the *divisio* that introduces the emperor's death and the material it governs: Augustus, for example, receives the death that he has always wanted. It is only the presentation of Titus' death that is exceptional and so it is with him that we shall begin our examination of Suetonius' arrangement in the good *Lives*.

---

[367] *Consulatu suo non temptatus in Campania motiunvulis levibus protinusque urbe repetita, Cutilias ac Reatina rura, ubi aestivare quotannis solebat, petit* (*Vesp*. 24).
[368] *Inter haec morte praventus est maiore hominum damno quam suo* (*Tit*. 10.1).

Good Deaths (Arrangement): Titus, Augustus, and Vespasian

Having announced Titus' death, Suetonius proceeds directly to two quasi-omens. After the conclusion of some public games, Titus 'wept copiously in the presence of the people'. Later in the Sabine country, Titus became 'somewhat gloomier' after the escape of a sacrificial victim and the boom of thunder from a clear sky.[369] Taken ill shortly thereafter, Titus 'is said to have looked up at the sky and strenuously objected that his life was being taken away from him undeservedly. For, as he said, there was no deed of his that he regretted save one'.[370]

Speculation on precisely what Titus regretted follows his lament. Some thought Titus had slept with his brother's wife Domitia, but Suetonius dismisses this. Domitia, he says, always denied the affair and she was the type to brag about that sort of thing.[371] Variant accounts are available. Dio also mentions the possibility that Titus slept with Domitia, but prefers the explanation that Titus' regret was not having put Domitian to death.[372] Ausonius, on the other hand, believed that Titus did nothing wrong, telling the emperor so in an apostrophe: 'but I do not believe anyone who says such things about you, even you yourself'.[373] Though Suetonius might agree that Rome would have been better off had Titus killed him, justifying fratricide might also interfere with the biographer's project of praising the emperor. Suetonius' agreement with Dio, however, on the possibility of a liaison between Titus and Domitia makes sense insofar as he is able to dismiss it and so defend the emperor. Ausonius' account might seem the most

---

[369] *Spectaculis absolutis, in quorum fine populo coram ubertime fleverat, Sabinos petit aliquanto tristior, quod sacrificanti hostia aufugerat quodque tempestate serena tonuerat* (*Tit.* 10.1).
[370] *Deinde ad primam statim mansionem febrim nanctus, cum inde lectica transferretur, suspexisse dicitur dimotis pallulis caelum, multumque conquestus eripi sibi vitam immerenti; neque enim extare ullum suum factum paenitendum excepto dum taxat uno* (*Tit.* 10.1).
[371] *Quidam opinantur consuetudinem recordatum, quam cum fratris uxore habuerit; sed nullam habuisse persancte Domitia iurabat, haud negatura, si qua omnino fuisset, immo etiam gloriatura, quod illi promptissimum erat in omnibus probris* (*Tit.* 10.2).
[372] ὁ δ' οὖν Τίτος ἀποψύχων εἶπε μὲν ὅτι "ἓν μόνον ἐπλημμέλησα", τί δὲ δὴ τοῦτο εἴη οὐ διεσάφησεν, ἀλλ' οὐδ' ἄλλος οὐδεὶς ἀκριβῶς ἀνέγνω. οἱ μὲν γὰρ τὸ οἱ δὲ τὸ κατείκασαν· ἄλλος οὐδεὶς ἀκριβῶς ἀνέγνω. οἱ μὲν γὰρ τὸ οἱ δὲ τὸ κατείκασαν· κρατεῖ δ' οὖν, ὡς μέν τινες λέγουσιν, ὅτι τὴν Δομιτίαν τὴν τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ γυναῖκα ἔσχεν, ὡς δ' ἕτεροι, οἷς ἐγὼ πείθομαι, ὅτι τὸν Δομιτιανὸν σαφῶς ἐπιβουλεύσαντά οἱ λαβὼν οὐκ ἀπέκτεινεν (66.26.3-4).
[373] *Unum dixisti moriens te crimen habere*: *sed nulli de te, non tibi credidimus* (*Caes.* 11).

positive, but the fact that no one knew what Titus meant when he acknowledged his one regret likely indicates that whatever it was, he did it privately. It had nothing to do with the *princeps* as such, and that is Suetonius' primary concern. Whatever the nature of the deed, in other words, what is significant about Titus' regret is that he had lived his life in such a way that he had only one and, most importantly, that it probably had nothing to do with his reign. Titus' objection to his death thus speaks directly to the argument I have been advancing throughout this chapter. In the opinion of both Suetonius' *divisio* and Titus himself, the virtue of the emperor's reign ought to have earned him a better death. At best, perhaps no death would have been worthy of such a paragon, and perhaps at worst, Titus could at least have experienced the *euthanasia* that Augustus desired and ultimately enjoyed.

The Augustan *divisio* introduces the emperor's death by means of omens. After this enumeration of omens (*Aug.* 97.1-2), Suetonius notes that Augustus planned to send Tiberius to Illyricum and escort him as far as Beneventum, and became ill after shipping off from Astura (*Aug.* 97.3). After going round the coast of Campania, Augustus arrived at Naples with 'his guts still troubled by occasional episodes of illness' (*Aug.* 98.1-5).[374] Despite this ailment, Augustus 'nevertheless took in a quiquennial gymnastic competition held in his honor'.[375] After accompanying Tiberius as far as Beneventum, Augustus' illness became worse and he stopped at Nola and gave up 'any important business' after recalling Tiberius (*maius negotium*; *Aug.* 98.5). On his last day, Augustus had his hair combed and his jaw set straight before speaking with his friends and asking them 'whether he seemed to have performed the play of life appropriately'.[376] The emperor's last words were to his wife, and then he died, 'having

[374] *Mox Neapolim traiecit quanquam etiam tum infirmis intestinis morbo variante* (*Aug.* 98.5).
[375] *tamen et quinquennale certamen gymnicum honori suo institutum perspectavit et cum Tiberio ad destinatum locum contendit* (*Aug.* 98.5). See Strabo 5.4.7 on the contest.
[376] *Supremo die identidem exquirens, an iam de se tumultus foris esset, petito speculo capillum sibi comi ac malas labantes corrigi praecepit et admissos amicos percontatus, ecquid iis videretur mi*[*n*]*mum vitae commode transegisse* (*Aug.* 99.1).

obtained the easy death he had always desired' and used to 'pray for', calling it εὐθανασία.[377]

From Campania onwards, Suetonius describes Augustus' travels as a vacation (*remississimo ad otium et ad omnem comitatem animo*; *Aug*. 98.1). Despite the leisure, Augustus does not cease to be a suitable *princeps*. His willingness to attend the games held in his honor despite his illness observes propriety and causes neither offense nor disappointment. When his illness worsens, Augustus gives up 'important business' only after he has recalled his successor Tiberius. Moments before his death, as Suetonius presents it, Augustus still insists on maintaining appearances, both literally and figuratively, before addressing his friends. Though the substance of the conversation between the emperor and his companions has received scholarly attention,[378] and Dio thought it cynical,[379] the answer Augustus seeks in Suetonius' account is a matter of validation. Augustus is asking for his friends' approval. This attitude is in obvious contrast to the behavior of the bad emperors and reinforces the image of the good *princeps* that Suetonius presents in the *Augustus*.

The biographer's emphasis on the 'job' of the *princeps* will also help to explain Vespasian's death. Vespasian, as we noted, did not alter his seasonal routine despite his illness in the *divisio* that introduces his death. This consistency of behavior, however, does not arouse Suetonius' disapproval because it anticipates the maintenance of a more important routine. Once Vespasian arrives at Reate, his illness worsens and develops the complication of diarrhea. Despite this illness, the emperor continued to perform his 'official duties out of habit' and 'even received embassies'.[380] As these things were going on, Vespasian was suddenly overcome by an attack of diarrhea. 'An emperor', he said, 'ought to die on his feet', and then he died as he struggled to get

---

[377] *sortitus exitum facilem et qualem semper optaverat. Nam fere quotiens audisset cito ac nullo cruciatu defunctum quempiam, sibi et suis* εὐθανασίαν *similem—hoc enim et verbo uti solebat—precebatur* (*Aug*. 99.1-2).
[378] See, *e.g*., Berthet (1978) 315 and Wardle (2007) 443-463.
[379] τοῦτο μὲν οὖν οὐ πρὸς τὸ τῶν οἰκοδομημάτων αὐτῆς ἀκριβὲς ἀλλὰ πρὸς τὸ τῆς ἀρχῆς ἰσχυρὸν ἐνεδείξατο· κρότον δὲ δή τινα παρ' αὐτῶν ὁμοίως τοῖς γελωτοποιοῖς, ὡς καὶ ἐπὶ μίμου τινὸς τελευτῇ, αἰτήσας καὶ πάμπανυ πάντα τὸν τῶν ἀνθρώπων βίον διέσκωψε (56.30.4).
[380] *Hic cum super urgentem valitudinem creberrimo frigidae aquae usu etiam intestina vitiasset nec eo minus muneribus imperatoriis ex consuetudine fungeretur, ut etiam legationes audiret cubans, alvo repente usque ad defectionem soluta, imperatorem ait stantem mori oportere* (*Vesp*. 24).

up.[381] Like Augustus, and perhaps to an even greater degree than the first *princeps*, Vespasian is ever mindful of his position and its importance and even illness does not keep him from his responsibilities. This routine is the only one with which Suetonius is concerned. So while Vespasian may not share Augustus' 'good death', he nonetheless dies a good *princeps*, perhaps sacrificing his health, and so his life, in a way that eludes the *Caesares*' suicides.

Throughout this discussion, I have concentrated on the movement from *divisio* to event. With the exceptions of Tiberius and Titus, there were no real surprises along the way. In addition to the contemporary sentiment that Suetonius often provides in the *divisiones*, the biographer invariably reports the public's reaction to the emperors' deaths. While these reactions are no more surprising than the general circumstances of the various deaths, it is worth examining two of the more eventful or demonstrative responses in order to drive home the point.

In the *Tiberius*, Suetonius reports that after Tiberius' death not only was the populace 'delighted (*laetatus est*; *Tib.* 75.1), but even that the emperor's 'unpopularity increased' (*crevit...invidia*; *Tib.* 75.3). This was the result of an unfortunate coincidence between the arrival of the news of Tiberius' death at Rome on the same day that several men were executed for lack of an authority who might grant pardon (*i.e.*, because, Suetonius says, Caligula had not yet appeared; *Tib.* 75.2). As the people thought, it was 'as if Tiberius' cruelty persisted even after his death' (*quasi etiam post mortem tyranni saevitia permanente*; *Tib.* 75.3). The uniformity of this reaction, however, is not matched by the reaction to Domitian's death. The people were 'indifferent' (*indifferenter*), but the soldiers took it 'very hard' (*gravissime*) and tried to have the emperor deified and were even willing to avenge him. Finally, the senate was 'so delighted (*adeo laetatus est*) it attacked the dead emperor with 'the most insulting and bitter sort of abusive calls'(*contumeliosissimo atque acerbissimo adclamationum genere laceraret*). They tore down

[381] *alvo repente usque ad defectionem soluta, imperatorem ait stantem mori oportere* (*Vesp.* 24).

his images (*imagines*), erased his inscriptions, and decreed that 'all memory of him be destroyed' (*abolendamque omnem memoriam*; *Dom*. 23.1).

The idea that Tiberius' reputation could be affected by something he was not alive to do and that would not, as Suetonius presents it, necessarily have been his fault if he had been,[382] illustrates the degree to which the biographer—not to mention the emperors' contemporaries—holds the emperors responsible for their deeds. Perception alone can be enough to vilify, or valorize, an emperor. Indeed, much of my treatment throughout this chapter has revolved around the opinion that people had of their ruler and its consequences. As Wallace-Hadrill has commented, vices "were what antagonised the emperors' subjects, and the vices that antagonised them were naturally the forms of abuse that affected them directly."[383] The mixed reaction to Domitian's death stands as proof of this statement. Though Domitian may have been as frightening and detestable to 'everyone' as his *divisio* states, the victims of his savagery tended to be senators (or else his own associates).[384] The beneficiaries of his generosity, on the other hand, tended to be the soldiers, to whom the emperor granted land and increased pay (*Dom*. 9.3 and 12.1). The contrasting reactions to his death thus make sense. The people may have feared their emperor, but he did not generally harm them and so they were indifferent, unlike the senate, which celebrated Domitian's death. And the soldiery naturally laments the death of its benefactor.

The formula is simple, even obvious, but it is worth noting that Suetonius does not call attention to it directly. Again, Domitian's *divisio* says that he was unpopular with all men of judgment. In the aftermath of the emperor's death, however, Suetonius does not explain the reasons for the different reactions to the assassination. For that explanation is left to the biographer's presentation of the emperor's *Life*. The *divisio*

---

[382] The coincidence of news of Tiberius' death and the execution was the result of a senatorial decree that required a ten waiting period between sentence and punishment (*Tib*. 75.2). Suetonius notably leaves out the fact that the senate passed this decree at Tiberius' urging (Tac. *Ann*. 3.51.2).

[383] Wallace-Hadrill (2004 [1983]) 157-158. Note that Wallace-Hadrill does not discuss what happens to the emperors in such situations, but rather how the values of the "propertied classes" would have conditioned what the emperors' subjects found offensive.

[384] Domitian's first victims are the pupil of the actor Paris and Hermogenes of Tarsus, about whom little is known. The remainder of Domitian's victims are upper class (*Dom*. 10.1). On Hermogenes, see Jones (1996) 84 and Mooney (1930) 554.

that introduces the emperor's death prepares the reader for the result of what the preceding rubrics and *divisiones* have anticipated and in that context is perhaps more mechanical than I have allowed in this chapter. For this *divisio* marks only the final tally in the transaction between the emperor and his subjects that Suetonius has presented.

Conclusion

One of the objections to this dissertation might be its lack of history or, more specifically, its failure to engage with the problem of Suetonius' literary representation of historical figures from an equally historical perspective. The Caesars were real people. They thought, they had feelings and favorite foods, and despite the arguments I have been making, some—perhaps many—things would have been beyond their control or even their planning. Suetonius offers his version of the Caesars. Parts of the biographer's *Lives* are obviously based on 'fact'. Suetonius did not, for example, invent Julius Caesar's assassination. Whether or not the dictator's assassins would have recognized or validated the victim that Suetonius presents, however, is another question. They may, for example, have found Plutarch's version of the dictator more consistent with their recollections of the man.

Wallace-Hadrill has suggested that Suetonius writes 'not-history' and adduces the differences in structure, subject matter, and style between ancient historiography and ancient biography as the basis for his description of the biographer's work.[385] The question of subject matter speaks, albeit indirectly, to the historicity of Suetonius' *Caesares*. As Wallace-Hadrill explains, in the ancient world history is about "the state, the *polis*, and its conflicts, external and internal," while biography concerns itself with "the life, personality and achievements of an individual."[386] So the absence of Corbulo from the *Nero* reflects Wallace-Hadrill's distinction of the genres. The general does not appear there because an account of his accomplishments, far from Rome and from Nero, would detract from Suetonius' emphasis on the emperor. If one adheres strictly to this point-of-view, 'history' is to some extent irrelevant to what Suetonius is doing, and we need not concern ourselves with it.

Throughout this dissertation, however, I have advanced the general claim that Suetonius' treatment of the emperors is more nuanced than previous scholarship has supposed. The obvious differences between the biographer and his historiographical

[385] Wallace-Hadrill (2004 [1983]) 9.
[386] Wallace-Hadrill (2004 [1983]) 15-16.

counterparts notwithstanding—Suetonius does not, for one, construct the *Lives* annalistically—we should ask whether the *Caesares* are as un-historical as they may seem. Or, more precisely, we should ask to what extent Suetonius strays from the historical goals frequently attributed to authors like Tacitus.

Tacitus' version of the emperor Tiberius has attracted especial attention for its apparent subscription to ancient notions of the immutability of character. According to Syme, it was "the way of thought of the ancients to conceive a man's inner nature as something definable and immutable."[387] Gill, however, has suggested that such a perspective may not be relevant to what Tacitus is doing. Emphasizing the historian's portrait of the brooding, deliberative emperor and his famous *dissimulatio*, Gill argues that though Tacitus' portrayal of the emperor rests on a fundamentally static character, the actual point is that the emperor's acts are the result of conscious decisions.[388] Tiberius chooses to do certain things, and his character as such is not what interests Tacitus. What matters is what Tiberius, as *princeps*, does. So, too, with Suetonius, who indicates from the start to the finish of each emperor's *Life* that the *princeps* almost always has a choice. He can 'change' in the sense that he does not have to be doing the things that he is doing.

Suetonius thus occupies common ground with the historian. While the biographer obviously limits himself to the emperor whereas Tacitus places his subject in a broader context of events, the questions of control that both authors ask about the emperors are strangely congruous. That is, the similarity is strange if one does not expect Suetonius to ask such questions in the first place. On the specific problem of the *Caesares* and history, Suetonius' similarity to Tacitus requires that we also modify our expectations for the answers such an investigation is likely to produce. For even if Tacitus' Tiberius is more real or more accurate than Suetonius', the common approach of both authors to the emperor indicates that Suetonius is more historical than is

[387] Syme (1958) 421.
[388] Gill (1983) 486: "After the opening thumbnail sketch of Tiberius (1.4), Tacitus shows no further interest in tracing back Tiberius' qualities to his childhood nature or in showing how his family traits came out in him. Tacitus' concern is rather to show that Tiberius' vices express a mature consciousness, and reflect deliberate choice." Woodman (1989) 197-205 follows up on Gill and argues that Tacitus is not talking about Tiberius' character (*ingenium*), but only his behavior patterns (*mores*).

generally thought. Whatever 'errors' Suetonius makes, the importance of his *divisiones* and their judgments suggests that the biographer is making them in service to his opinion of the emperors. Suetonius' project, if not his execution, is the same as Tacitus'.

Wallace-Hadrill's 'not-history' is thus helpful insofar as it establishes that Suetonius' aim is not to produce a historical narrative (annalistic or otherwise) such as his contemporaries would have recognized. For there is little value in criticizing the biographer for not doing things that he had no intention of doing. Even so, for the reasons I have sketched out above, we should pause before assuming that this 'not-history' led Suetonius to a fundamentally literary, and unhistorical, presentation of the emperors. For if one compares Suetonius to his Greek counterpart and near contemporary Plutarch, this 'not-history' did not necessarily lead Suetonius even to compose biography. One might, in other words, argue just as easily that Suetonius writes 'not-biography'

In addition to his well-known *Parallel Lives*, Plutarch has left behind four other biographies: the *Artaxerxes*, the *Aratus*, and the *Galba* and *Otho*. The latter two are the only extant biographies from Plutarch's *Imperial Lives*, which treated Rome's emperors from Augustus through Vitellius. In the *Galba*, Plutarch concludes his preface with comments that leave the impression of a historical purpose in addition to a biographical one: 'To recount precisely each of the things that happened is the task of the professional historian, but it is also not appropriate for me to omit as much of the Caesars' deeds and experiences as are worthy of mention'.[389] As Plutarch's *Galba* proceeds, the reader encounters numerous personalities prominent for their deeds and their historical importance (*e.g.*, Nymphidius Sabinus, Titus Vinius, Clodius Macer, Verginius Rufus, and Cornelius Laco) and of the sort that Suetonius generally omits or

[389] τὰ μὲν οὖν καθ' ἕκαστα τῶν γενομένων ἀπαγγέλλειν ἀκριβῶς τῆς πραγματικῆς ἱστορίας ἐστίν, ὅσα δ' ἄξια λόγου τοῖς τῶν Καισάρων ἔργοις καὶ πάθεσι συμπέπτωκεν, οὐδ' ἐμοὶ προσήκει παρελθεῖν (*Galba* 2.5). See also Little and Ehrhardt (1994) 42.

treats perfunctorily (*e.g.*, Agrippa in the *Augustus*, Sejanus in the *Tiberius*, Macro in the *Caligula*, the aforementioned Corbulo, Caecina and Valens in the *Vitellius*, and so on.).

In the *Parallel Lives*, by contrast, it is generally agreed that Plutarch's purpose is moral.[390] This is perhaps most evident in the preface to the *Alexander*, in which Plutarch also suggests that biography is a better vehicle for moral instruction than history: 'I will beg my readers not to complain if I do not record all the deeds of these men [Alexander and Caesar] nor treat them thoroughly at all in particular instances. For I am not writing history, but lives, and the most famous deeds do not always provide signs of virtue and vice'.[391] While it would be foolish to speculate on the content of the *Caesares*' lost preface, Suetonius makes no overt statement of such a moral purpose in what survives of the Imperial *Lives*. Though his *divisiones* express judgments that subsequent rubrics illustrate as parts of an evaluative agenda, Suetonius nowhere indicates that this evaluation is intended to be morally instructive.

Plutarch's general claim for the utility of the form or genre he has chosen offers another perspective from which to examine the different programs. In the first *divisio* of the *Augustus*, Suetonius says that he will proceed by rubric rather than by chronology so 'the parts of Augustus' life can be more clearly demonstrated and understood'.[392] Both biographers thus acknowledge the importance of utility or the reader's convenience, but where Plutarch adduces the elucidation of virtue and vice as its object, Suetonius speaks of the presentation and comprehension of the 'parts' of a life. Though Suetonius clearly wants his reader to understand the *Caesares*, in other words, he does not express the goal of that understanding. The reader is free to draw moral conclusions from this material, but Suetonius himself does not insist. This absence of a moral purpose in the *Caesares* is perhaps all the more puzzling given the evaluation and judgments that Suetonius, as I have argued, writes into his *divisiones*.

---

[390] Lamberton (2001) 64-65 suggests that the *Parallel Lives* are even 'ahistorical' and that Plutarch presents details strictly for the purposes of moral instruction.

[391] Παραιτησόμεθα τοὺς ἀναγινώσκοντας, ἐὰν μὴ πάντα μηδὲ καθ' ἕκαστον ἐξειργασμένως τι τῶν περιβοήτων ἀπαγγέλλωμεν, ἀλλ' ἐπιτέμνοντες τὰ πλεῖστα, μὴ συκοφαντεῖν. οὔτε γὰρ ἱστορίας γράφομεν, ἀλλὰ βίους, οὔτε ταῖς ἐπιφανεστάταις πράξεσι πάντως ἔνεστι δήλωσις ἀρετῆς ἢ κακίας (*Alex.* 1.1-2).

[392] *Proposita vitae eius velut summa parte<s> singillatim neque per tempora sed per species exequar, quo distinctius demonstrari cognoscique possint* (*Aug.* 9.1)

Before addressing the question of Suetonius' purpose directly, however, we first need to consider the problem created by the moral vacuum. For this, in combination with his lack of a historical narrative, is what has led some scholars to suppose that Suetonius is an objective, if indiscriminate, compiler.

Even if one stops short of accusing Suetonius of fabrication, for example, there remains the traditional problem of the (alleged) gossip and rumor that the biographer includes in the private details of the *Caesares*. Suetonius does not present this material in a sequence of events, and because he does not posit an overt moral agenda in place of the missing chronology, he must 'believe' the things that he records—Tiberius and his 'little fishes' come to mind (*pisculi*; *Tib.* 44.1)—but that modern scholarship hesitates to validate as historical. By 'not-biography', then, I mean that for all that 'not-history' seems to eschew the tenets of its eponymous genre, it is not clear that Suetonius therefore embraces the characteristics of the biographers that preceded him. A moral purpose, in particular, might at least imply literary manipulation of historical facts for the sake of instruction, and one could adduce the same purpose for Suetonius' inclusion of the odd tidbits of personal scandal that may or may not be authentic. We should not, however, divorce Suetonius' general purpose—whatever it may be—from the manner in which he presents his material or, perhaps better, from where he claims to have obtained his information. The question of Suetonius' sources has been a matter of some debate, centered mostly on information gleaned from the Hippo inscription, so let me briefly discuss this inscription and some related topics in order to outline an approach to Suetonius that will bring the above discussions of history and biography together.

The Hippo inscription, originally published in 1952, revealed that Suetonius held three important positions in service to the emperors Trajan and Hadrian, *a studiis*, *a bibliothecis*, *ab epistulis*.[393] It has often been thought that these posts afforded

[393] See Marec and Pflaum (1952) for the inscription. Debate over Suetonius' career and whether he was from Hippo, a place more famous for Augustine than Suetonius, can be found in, among others, Crook (1957), Gascou (1978), Pflaum (1960), and Townend (1961).

Suetonius access to privileged information contained within the Imperial archives. The biographer's dismissal from Hadrian's court along with the praetorian prefect (and Suetonius' patron) Septicius Clarus around the year 122 would have terminated such access as Suetonius supposedly enjoyed to the archives as a result of his job. The *Lives* following the Julio-Claudian sequence, according to the traditional argument, suffered as a result.[394] While some have expressed hesitancy about these claims,[395] De Coninck has argued that there is little evidence that Suetonius would have needed to use the archives at all.[396] The material the biographer cites, according to De Coninck, would have been available to him in other literary sources.

Though the reception of De Coninck's work has generally been positive,[397] the debate in which De Coninck engages is naturally geared towards modern historians and their need to verify what Suetonius reports, since his citation of sources obviously lends weight to whatever he is saying. The relative dearth of named references such as Cicero or even the emperor himself from the later *Lives* (Galba to Domitian) has likely contributed to the impression that the biographer benefited from the archives during the composition of the Julio-Claudian *Lives*. For the last six *Lives*, then, Suetonius' reader might understandably be suspicious of the biographer's claims. A lack of specific references, however, is different from no references at all. No matter the extent to which Suetonius relied on the archives for the Julio-Claudian *Lives*, it is worth commenting more generally on Suetonius' use of sources to get a sense of how he intended all the *Lives* to be received.

Tradere is one of Suetonius' means of introducing written sources. He uses the verb in one form or another forty-six times in the *Caesares*.[398] Two of these need not

---

[394] See, in particular, Townend (1959) 285ff.

[395] See Baldwin (1983) 48 and 134ff. and Wallace-Hadrill (2004 [1983]) 89ff. Both scholars emphasize Suetonius' use of Augustus' letters and note the possibility (indeed, the probability) that these documents were available in limited circulation. Gellius, for example, quotes Augustus' letters and no one has suggested that he relied on the Imperial archives for this material (*Att. Noc.* x.11.5, x.24.2, xv.7, and l.3.

[396] De Coninck (1983).

[397] See, *e.g.*, Birley (1984) 245-251 and Bradley (1985) 255.

[398] *Jul*. 45.1, 52.2, 82.2, and 83.1; *Aug*. 7.1, 15, 27.2, 74, 77, 79.2, 80, 84.1, and 88; *Tib*. 3.2 and 21.2; *Cal*. 4, 8.1, 8.5, 14.1, 16.1, 25.1, 49.3, 55.3, and 58.2; *Claud*. 1.4, 9.1, 27.1, 41.2, and 44.2; *Nero* 1.1, 7.1, 30.3, and 54; *Galba* 3.2, 20.1, and 22; *Otho* 2.2, 7.1, and 12.1; *Vit.* 1.1, 13.2, and 14.5; *Vesp*. 1.2, 16.3, and 21. Note that there are no instances of the verb from the *Titus* and the *Domtian*.

concern us, as they do not deal with sources that Suetonius uses, though they do refer to written texts (*Cal.* 16.1 and *Claud.* 41.2).[399] Between the Julio-Claudian *Lives* and the remainder of the *Caesares*, the ratio is thirty-two and twelve. The preponderance of written sources in the Julio-Claudian *Lives* may seem to privilege the traditional argument that Suetonius had access to archived material for the composition of those *Lives.* Of all these examples, however, Suetonius mentions only six by name: Quintus Tubero (*Jul.* 83.1), Cornelius Nepos (*Aug.* 77), Julius Marathus (*Aug.* 79.2), Julius Saturninus (*Aug.* 27.2), Valerius Messala (*Aug.* 74), and the emperor Claudius (*Claud.* 41.2). Of these six, only Julius Saturninus and perhaps Julius Marathus seem possible candidates for inclusion in the archives.[400] The remaining twenty-six examples refer vaguely to 'some', 'many', 'not none', or else are part of an impersonal construction ('he is reported to have...').

We can also break Suetonius' citations down by *Life*. The *Augustus* and the *Caligula* have eight, the *Claudius* has five, the *Julius* and *Nero* have four, and the *Tiberius* and *Galba-Vespasian* have three each. Four of the *Augustus*' eight instances are unnamed, and none of the *Caligula*'s eight is named. With the exception of the *Augustus*, this leaves Suetonius' reader with an abundance of unnamed sources. The anonymity of Suetonius' sources naturally leaves open the question of their reliability or, even, their existence. My presentation should not, moreover, be understood as thorough. Suetonius has other ways of supporting his material, including contemporary accounts of the biographer's own grandfather about Caligula (*Cal.* 19.3), of his father about Otho (*Otho* 11.1), and of Suetonius himself about Domitian (*Dom.* 12.2).

Suetonius' use of sources, as I have noted, has mostly been the province of modern historians. Though the question of authenticity is certainly important, I have tried to illustrate the importance of distinguishing between questions of fact and questions of presentation. Suetonius' access to and use of the Imperial archives is a question of fact, and his reliability as a historical source (particularly in the Julio-

[399] See *Aug.* 7.1 and *Cal.* 16.1 (*tradantur*).
[400] Little more is known about either man beyond what Suetonius reports; see *PIR*^{2} I.402 and 545. See also Carter (1982) 27.2.

Claudian *Lives*) may depend on how one responds to this question. No matter what the answer, however, Suetonius' references to frequently unnamed sources still remain. This particular habit of citation indicates that Suetonius wants his reader to think that he has sources in all the *Lives.* He wants his reader to believe that he is not fabricating items. Such attempts to establish credibility are not of course unusual or surprising, but unless we wish to attribute a Herodotean 'malice' to Suetonius, we are left with a collection of *Lives* that purport to be accurate and reliable representations of their subjects. They are, in that sense, 'historical'. Alongside this claim to documented accuracy, however, Suetonius runs another 'source' of information. In the two concluding chapters of this dissertation, I called attention to the relationship between the emperor's behavior and its effect on his subjects. While advancing the general claim of what the emperor can control, I have argued that Suetonius' interest was not solely what the emperor does, but what the emperor does in response to the opinions of his contemporaries. This process naturally requires Suetonius to report contemporary opinion, and in the final chapter I placed especial emphasis on the biographer's *divisiones* as the location for some of this sentiment.

What people thought about their emperor, however, is not necessarily an accurate reflection of what the emperor did or intended. As Morgan has argued, for example, Suetonius' account of Nero's alleged grain profiteering (*Nero* 45.1) is not entirely fair to the emperor.[401] The biographer is not interested in Nero's reasons for selling grain at inflated prices during a period of food shortage (*publica fames*). Suetonius' purpose in relating the incident is to comment that Nero's 'unpopularity increased' (*adcrevit invidia*) as a result of the public's perception of the situation. The anecdote thus reveals "the people's readiness to seize on any item, factual or not, tending to strengthen their belief that Nero was capable of the most outrageous behavior."[402] In such a context, historical reality is relevant only as a broad framework. The emperor that, say, Nero was, is the emperor that people remembered. Though

[401] Morgan (2000) 210-222.
[402] Morgan (2000) 210.

Suetonius' documentation of certain events may make them more reliable or useful to the modern historian, the biographer's concern with what people thought about the emperor also means that whether or not the emperor actually did something is not exclusively the point. What matters, too, is that people thought the emperor did or could have done it. This may be history of a kind, but it is not the sort that one identifies with 'facts' and dates.

Such an approach is not unusual in Roman literature, and I do not present it here as something novel save for its application to Suetonius. As odd or, perhaps, as obvious as a statement it may seem, Suetonius is as Roman as his contemporaries, and there is little need to invoke the foreign traditions with which I began this dissertation in order to explain what the biographer is doing. The question of a specific genre is less clear. The *Caesares* are not biography in the mold of Plutarch's ethical character studies or of any extant, earlier tradition. In that sense, they are, 'not-biography', and this is what prompted Leo to look for genetic antecedents in a tradition of Alexandrian scholarship. And though Suetonius probes the emperors in a manner akin to Tacitus, the *Caesares* are obviously not history. They construct a version of the emperors that is based on both history and the public scrutiny to which Suetonius expects the emperors to respond.

If we extend the notion of Suetonius as a 'man of his times', and consider his personal experiences as a member of the imperial court, it is not unreasonable to suppose that these to some degree inspired the biographer to compose the *Caesares.* Though I do not wish to rely too heavily on the biographical fallacy, Suetonius' work in the imperial administration might very well have granted him peculiar insight into the day-to-day job of the *princeps*.[403] And, I would like to suggest, the purpose of Suetonius' evaluation in the *Caesares*—or, perhaps better, the purpose of the *Caesares* themselves—is to assess the *princeps*' performance at his job. On this interpretation, Suetonius' interest is not so much the man responsible for the *princeps*, but the *princeps* as the man

[403] To clarify, I do not intend this as a restatement of Wallace-Hadrill's equestrian/bureaucratic values (on which, see **Introduction**). It is not Suetonius' skills as a scholar or his equestrian viewpoint as such (to the extent that these things can be successfully reconstructed) that we should stress, but rather, I would argue, his experiences as a member of the imperial court.

responsible for a particular reign. This means, to some extent, that questions of character will give way to more pragmatic issues of functionality. The question is not, for example, whether or not Augustus is a good man, but whether he is a good *princeps.* Or, to work in somewhat reverse fashion, Suetonius assesses each reign to determine whether the *princeps* behind it is, or is not, functionally sound.

As for the criteria by which Suetonius makes this determination, in the latter half of this dissertation I have drawn attention to the contemporary responses to the emperor's behavior. Approval as a form of positive reinforcement is not strictly germane to the assessment of the *princeps.* For the *princeps*' job—as Nero the *artifex* seemed never to recognize fully—is his job no matter what. Disapproval, however, can be an indication that the *princeps* is not performing suitably and, as I have suggested, the value the *princeps* attaches to this sentiment is a measure of his opinion of the people who judge him. Wallace-Hadrill has argued for the notion of the *civilis princeps*, or the idea that the ideal emperor is one who presents himself as a "simple citizen."[404] The first use of the abstract noun *civilitas* as an ethical term, as Wallace-Hadrill notes, appears in Suetonius' *Augustus*.[405] *Civilitas*—along with *modestia*, *moderatio*, and *comitas*—is a kind of a "condescension" that meets with approval.[406] In brief, *civilitas* "evokes the behavior of a ruler who is still a citizen in a society of citizens, where the freedom and standing of the individual citizen is protected by the law, not the whim of an autocrat."[407]

The *princeps*, of course, is an autocrat and so the extent to which he fulfills Wallace-Hadrill's 'job-description' is, in this context, naturally a matter of choice. Like much of the material covered in this dissertation, it is 'up to' him. If, moreover, Suetonius expects the emperors to answer to all of his subjects' complaints, and evaluates them on that basis, the Caesars are finally citizens. Some are good, and most are bad, but all are citizens. Though Augustus as the first *princeps*, and a good one,

---

[404] Wallace-Hadrill (1982) 32-48.
[405] Wallace-Hadrill (1982) 43n.90. *Civilitas* appears earlier in Quintilian (*Inst. Or.* II.15.25), but not with the meaning intended by Suetonius; cf. *Aug.* 51.
[406] See Wallace-Hadrill (1982) 41-42 for specific definitions of *modestia*, *moderatio*, and *comitas*.
[407] Wallace-Hadrill (1982) 42.

might seem the best candidate for Suetonius' 'ideal' emperor, the biographer's description of Titus as 'the favorite and the joy of the entire human race' represents the fullest realization of the citizen emperor.[408] For whereas Suetonius covers Augustus' generous treatment of the orders (*Aug.* 35-47), as well as of foreign kingdoms (*Aug.* 48)[409] at length, he condenses the sentiment behind this material into a single, explicit statement in the *Titus.* Titus treated everyone well—both citizens and non-citizens—and thus was loved by all people. Still, the only opinion that 'counts' is that of the emperor's fellow citizens. Hence Suetonius adduces the letter Tiberius receives from the Parthian king Artabanus. In this, Artabanus urges Tiberius to commit suicide and to gratify the wishes of the people whom he has abused and neglected, the *princeps*' 'fellow citizens'.[410] Even a foreigner, so Suetonius would have it, sought to remind the *princeps* of what he was and of his proper audience.

[408] *amor ac deliciae generis humanis* (*Tit.* 1).
[409] Earlier in the *Life*, Suetonius points out that Augustus never went to war against another country 'without just and compelling reasons' (*sine iustis et necessariis causis*; *Aug*. 21.2).
[410] *Quin et Artabani Parthorum regis laceratus est litteris parricidia et caedes et ignaviam et luxuriam obicientis monentisque, ut voluntaria morte maximo iustissimoque civium odio quam primum satis faceret* (*Tib*. 66).

Appendix A

This appendix is provided in order to provide interested readers with more information about physiognomy. It will survey, as briefly as possible, some relevant examples ranging from early Greek literature and art up to the time of Suetonius. This treatment is by no means thorough, and a complete discussion of physiognomy can be found in Vogt's recent commentary on the pseudo-Aristotelian *Physiognomonica*, to which this appendix is heavily indebted.[411] Instead, I will try to provide a sense of the ideas or beliefs that led to and preceded the formalization of physiognomy, some of the difficulties modern scholars have encountered in working with the treatises, and finally, offer a fuller account of the limitations of the physiognomic interpretation of Suetonius' *Caesares.*

Physiognomy is an ancient science, the basic premise of which is that an individual's character can be determined from his or her physical appearance. Physical descriptions of individuals can be found in literature dating back to Homer, well before the systematization of the science. Thersites, for example, was the 'ugliest man who came to Troy'. Among other physical defects, he was bow-legged and had a pointy head,[412] and this ugly exterior, was matched by the ugliness of Thersites' behavior and character. One might discern here a sense of what Lloyd calls "popular belief or folklore," and that less clinically, we might call prejudice.[413] Thersites' appearance, in other words, was a sign of what his character was likely to be.

This relationship between physical appearance and character is what Vogt refers to as a sort of "physiognomic equivalence: the attractive is good, the ugly bad."[414] While the Homeric Thersites, as well as others of the poet's heroes,[415] provides an easy

[411] Vogt (1999).
[412] αἴσχιστος δὲ ἀνὴρ ὑπὸ Ἴλιον ἦλθε· φολκὸς ἔην, χωλὸς δ' ἕτερον πόδα· τὼ δὲ οἱ ὤμω κυρτώ, ἐπὶ στῆθος συνοχωκότε· αὐτὰρ ὕπερθε φοξὸς ἔην κεφαλήν, ψεδνὴ δ' ἐπενήοθε λάχνη (Hom. *Il*. 2.216-219).
[413] Lloyd (1983) 24.
[414] Vogt (1999) 54: "physiognomischer Äquivalenz: der Schöne ist gut, der Schlechte häßlich."
[415] See Sassi (2001 [1988]) 36-38 and Vogt (1999) 54-58.

example of this general Greek ideal of καλοκἀγαθία,[416] we can also look to the art of the same approximate time period for evidence of the ideal. The smile is perhaps the most enduring and recognizable feature of the Archaic *kouros*. Being more than an ancient precursor to the enigmatic Mona Lisa, these upturned corners of the mouth "refer not to a temporary affect, but to a constant kind of nature."[417] Not only are the face and its expression to be taken into consideration during one's evaluation, but also the entire body of the *kouros* and our attention is meant to focus on the youth and the definition of the figure's limbs and muscles. The beauty of this 'package' again reflects the ideal pairing of physical and ethical virtue.

There are numerous other examples of this belief in καλοκἀγαθία in evidence as one advances along the timeline towards the systematization of the general claims about appearance and character that the ideal suggests. The famous poem of Semonides on women, for example, displays an interest in "permanent character traits [and] the affinity between man and animal is inferred not simply from aspects of behavior but also from physical resemblance."[418] Portraiture, too, continues this trend. The surviving statue bust of Pericles, for example, betrays signs of a desire to idealize a semi-realistic representation of the Athenian statesman and general for the sake of positive interpretation. According to tradition, Pericles had an oddly shaped head, and artistic representations of the man thus always presented him as a helmeted *strategos*. The concealment of the odd feature thus allows the viewer's attention to focus on the reserved character of Pericles' facial features, which are themselves a reflection of his self-control.[419]

---

[416] Rosen (2007) 82ff. suggests that, within a satiric context, what invalidates Thersites' potentially valid position in his dispute with Agamemnon is that he does not embody the ideal of καλοκἀγαθία.
[417] Vogt (1999) 53: "nicht auf eine vorübergehenden Affekt, sondern auf eine konstante Wesensart verweist."
[418] Sassi (2001 [2988]) 39-40.
[419] Vogt (1999) 60-64; see Prot. *Fr*. 80 B 9 D-K on Pericles' even response to the death of his children. Note the cautionary statement of Dillon (2006) 7: "The assumed relationship between portraiture and what we might call archival data, which consists of historical information about the lives, behavior, and character of portrait subjects derived from literary sources, is something that has to be interrogated rather than simply taken for granted. While a portrait statute might give visual form to particulars of a subject's biography [it] might also be actively involved in constructing a subject's biography. In some cases, a person's portrait may have questioned, even contradicted, received accounts of a person's character and appearance by presenting an alternative version for audience consumption."

Deviations from the ideal can also be found. Archilochus, for one, seems to reject it, saying that he does prefers 'the shorter and bandy-legged general,' who is sure of foot and brave to one who is tall and well-groomed.[420] Perhaps the most famous violation of the ideal is the philosopher Socrates. In no attempt at cosmetic apology, Xenophon's *Symposium* likens the philosopher's appearance to the Naïads' offspring, the Sileni (5.7), and this image is recalled in Plato's *Theatetus* (143^{e}7-9; 209^{b}10-^{c}2). Alcibiades, in Plato's *Symposium*, provides the most famous account of Socrates' appearance. The Socrates-Silenus comparison, while generally consistent with the other sources, is significantly expanded here to include the philosopher's nature as well as his appearance (215^{a}6-217^{a}2). In addition to appearance, Socrates shares Silenus' love of beauty and the ability to mesmerize others, though he does so with his words rather than with music. Most significantly, both Socrates and Silenus conceal their true nature beneath their rough appearance. Socrates' actual nature is like the 'prize' or ἄγαλμα one finds upon opening up a Silenus figure. Socrates, in other words, violates the contemporary cultural ideal which associates the ugly with the bad.[421]

Neither of these negative examples, however, should necessarily be thought to undermine the ideal of καλοκἀγαθία. One might even say that they reaffirm it insofar as they acknowledge it. More generally, we should note the persistent and increasing interest in the individual and the relationship between his or her appearance and character. For this is the intellectual backdrop against which the formal development of the ancient discipline known as physiognomy took place. To recap very briefly what has been a selective and condensed survey, the primary feature of both the literature and the art that we have covered has been an acceptance, or rejection, of a socially-accepted, normative ideal: καλοκἀγαθία. The premise of the ideal is that a 'good' external appearance indicates ethical virtue. This is physiognomy in its most basic sense, or what Vogt terms 'physiognomic equivalence.' Physiognomic equivalence,

[420] Arch. *fr*. 114 West: οὐ φιλέω μέγαν στρατηγὸν οὐδὲ διαπεπλιγμένον οὐδὲ βοστρύχοισι γαῦρον οὐδ' ὑπεξυρημένον, ἀλλά μοι σμικρός τις εἴη καὶ περὶ κνήμας ἰδεῖν ῥοικός, ἀσφαλέως βεβηκὼς ποσσί, καρδίης πλέως.
[421] Vogt (1999) 77ff. speaks at greater length of the difficulties that descriptions and sculptural representations of Socrates present.

however, is not the same thing as physiognomy, and we can now turn our attention to the advancement of the 'science' into a formal discipline.

Philosophy and ancient medicine are the most important areas of Greek literature for understanding the development of physiognomy. To establish the technical groundwork more distinctly from the general καλοκἀγαθία, we will need to revisit Plato briefly, before moving onto to an examination of ancient medicine and Aristotle.

As I have already noted, the relationship between appearance and character shows up in the Platonic corpus on more than one occasion. Alcibiades' description of Socrates is perhaps the most well-known of Plato's physical descriptions, but there are four more examples that deal closely with the relationship between appearance and character that we have been discussing. These are particularly significant as they retain the comparison between humans and animals we noted in Semonides, and that would become one of the trademarks of the physiognomists.

A clear case of the comparison between man and animal occurs at the beginning of the *Republic*. Polemarchus and Socrates are discussing the Just. Thrasymachus, unable to restrain himself, interrupts the conversation, and 'pulling himself together like a wild animal came at us like he was going to rip us apart'.[422] Later in the same work, Plato shifts from the general 'wild animal' to associating men with specific animals in his account of the transmigration of the soul: Orpheus and the swan, Thamyras and the nightingale, Ajax and the lion, Agamemnon and the eagle, and Thersites and the monkey (10.620^{a}-^{d}5). Similar comparisons are made in the *Phaedo*, also in the context of the transmigration of the soul, though the focus this time is on types rather than named individuals, e.g., the unjust man, the tyrannical man, and the robber with the wolf, hawk, and kite (81^{e}2-82^{c}1). Similar to the *Phaedo*'s emphasis on types, the account of the horse driver of the soul in the *Phaedrus* also focuses on types, though the emphasis this time is on behavior. The good horse, obedient and modest, is

[422] συστρέψας ἑαυτὸν ὥσπερ θηρίον ἦκεν ἐφ' ἡμᾶς ὡς διαπρασόμενος (Plat. *Rep*. 1.336^{b}5).

fittingly good looking; the bad horse, on the other hand, is stubborn and lustful and, among other negative physical features, is 'poorly built'.[423]

In the first three examples, we encounter one of the basic tools of the physiognomist, namely, animal comparisons. One point to bear in mind here, however, is that these passages are more descriptive than predictive. They do not, in other words, fulfill the purpose of physiognomy, but instead deal with and describe known quantities. One might, for example, infer from the *Republic* that an unknown man with an eagle-like appearance such as Agamemnon's is a leader of men. But Plato does not actually say this and an interpretative lesson as such does not appear to be his goal.[424] The passage from the *Phaedrus*, which consists of physical features and certain kinds of behavior, can be termed a 'physiologic' description. Such descriptions, as will be demonstrated, also come to form an essential component of the physiognomist's profession. The Platonic usage here, however, lacks the specificity of later physiognomic descriptions. It does not associate specific features with particular traits, but instead seems to work on a principle of general impression. Thus far, then, while Plato's works certainly contain physiognomic elements, they do so on a level that is less than professional.[425]

There are three other Platonic examples, however, that reflect a greater degree of technical proficiency owing to the influence of ancient medicine, and that will also serve as a segue into an examination of medicine and physiognomy.

In the *Timaeus*, Plato again uses physiologic descriptions. His purpose, as in the *Phaedrus*, is to depict character types, but with the significant addition of gender (69^{a}-92^{e}). Throughout this entire discussion, Plato betrays the influence of ancient medical knowledge in his rather detailed anatomical descriptions as well as his explanations for the effects that the various mechanisms of the human body have on the individual's behavior and character.[426] In the *Laws*, Plato moves away from physiologic descriptions

[423] εἰκῆ συμπεφορημένος (Plat. *Phaed*. $253^{d}1$-$^{e}5$).
[424] Indeed, Plato is not consistent in associating the physical features of the individual with a specific animal. Agamemnon, for example, is not said to look like an eagle, just to share some of its abstract qualities.
[425] See Vogt (1999) 89-92 for a fuller discussion of these passages.
[426] Vogt (1999) 91. cf., Evans (1969) 20.

and instead discusses the influence of climate and geography on the individual's character (5.747^{d}1-^{e}9). Plato's account of the foundation of Athens in Attica by Athena and Hephaestus in the *Critias* and the *Timaeus* works along similar lines (*Crit.* 109^{c}5-^{d}2; *Tim.* 24^{c}3-^{d}3): 'so at that time, when the goddess had set this whole system up for you in particular, she settled you, having chosen the place in which you were born since she noted the mildness of the region there was likely to produce the wisest men'.[427] These last explanations for character are unlike the previously encountered physiognomic equivalence as well as the animal comparison we have already encountered, and are clearly related to the medical treatises, notably the Hippocratic *De Aere*.[428] Because of the influence of such texts on both Plato and Aristotle, as well as on the thinkers who would ultimately systematize physiognomy, it is necessary to discuss briefly the relevant medical precepts before moving on to Aristotle and the Peripatetics.

The medical doctrine most essential for physiognomy is the theory of humours.[429] As Tsouna succinctly states, the theory, "operates on the principle that conditions in the mind are connected with states in the body."[430] This principle, as we shall see, is fundamental for the later formalization of physiognomy, but a preliminary issue must be addressed. As Evans, quoting Galen, notes, when the physiognomists say that their subject "has a chest like a lion and is therefore spirited, but legs like a goat, and is lascivious, they described what they have observed, but they have omitted the reason for these characteristics." The reason for the characteristics, as posited by the ancient physicians, is the mixture or *krasis* of the four humours: blood, phlegm, yellow bile, and black bile.[431] We have already seen the influence of this theory upon Plato in

[427] ταύτην οὖν δὴ τότε σύμπασαν τὴν διακόσμησιν καὶ σύνταξιν ἡ θεὸς προτέρους ὑμᾶς διακοσμήσασα κατῴκισεν, ἐκλεξαμένη τὸν τόπον ἐν ᾧ γεγένησθε, τὴν εὐκρασίαν τῶν ὡρῶν ἐν αὐτῷ κατιδοῦσα, ὅτι φρονιμωτάτους ἄνδρας οἴσοι: ἅτε οὖν φιλοπόλεμός (*Tim.* 24^{c})
[428] Vogt (1999) 91-92.
[429] It is worth noting in passing that Galen refers to Hippocrates as the founder of physiognomy, πρώτος εὑρτής (*Quod animi mores* 804-808). Porphyry on the other hand credits Pythagoras. cf., Barton (2002 [1994]) 98; Evans (1969) 13 and 19; Tsouna (1998) 180; Vogt (1999) 118. Evans (1969) 8-11 and 17-28, provides a more thorough account of the connections between medicine physiognomy than that which I will here.
[430] Tsouna (1998) 179.
[431] See Evans (1945) 291; Tsouna (1998) 179-80; Vogt (1999) 113. The humoral theory is first ascribed to the Pythagorean Alcmaeon of Croton; the theory was then adopted by the Hippocratics and later expanded up on by Galen.

his descriptions of people and their geographical locations in the *Critias*, the *Laws*, and the *Phaedrus*. The relationship between the individual and his locale, according to Hippocratic doctrine, is two-fold. On the one hand, the quality of drinking water is singled out as determinative of health by its effect upon one's humoral constitution (*de Aere* 1-11). On the other hand, and more importantly for our purposes, the actual climate of a region is said to predispose the local inhabitants towards certain physical and character-related features (*de Aere* 12-24).[432]

While physiognomy is capable of making determinations of character along just such lines as the Hippocratic view of a region and its climate's influence on the human body and disposition, the most significant contribution ancient medicine makes to physiognomy by its humoral theory is in providing a mechanism for explanation. To recall Tsouna's formulation, "that conditions in the mind [or soul] are connected with states in the body," the crux here is the possibility that there are external signs of the body from which one can infer what is happening beneath the skin. The humoral theory thus provides scientific justification for physiognomy evaluation by providing the actual substance of interaction between the internal and external. To clarify, external factors such as climate are not necessarily within the physiognomist's purview. Nor in fact is the physiognomist even concerned with the actual humoral constitution of his subject. As we shall see presently, this principle is not fully treated by the physiognomists and appears only sporadically and indirectly in their works.

The passage which has most attracted the greatest attention from modern scholars in assessing ancient physiognomics comes from Aristotle's *Prior Analytics*. At the end of the second book, he mentions physiognomy as an example of enthymeme and states:

if then this were granted and for each thing [change or affection] there is one sign, and if we were able to grasp the affection and the sign proper to each kind [of animal], then we shall be able to practise physiognomy. For *if* there is an affection that belongs properly to some indivisible kind—such as courage to lions—there is necessarily also

[432] See Evans (1969) 18-21; Tsouna (1998) 179; Vogt (1999) 113.

a sign for it: for it is assumed that they are modified together [trans. and emphasis by Lloyd].[433]

Lloyd dismisses this passage, calling its treatment "hypothetical throughout," and his translation emphasizes its conditional qualities (i.e., *if...if...*).[434] While he goes on to acknowledge the presence of physiognomical correlations in Aristotle's *Historia Animalium*, his final analysis of these is not much more positive than that for the *An. pr.*, referring to the relevant passages as, "quite modest and restrained."[435] Lloyd's treatment of these texts is underpinned by the premise that some of the ideas present in Aristotle's work, physiognomy among them, are based on the contemporary prejudice with which we began our discussion."[436] Aristotle's purpose, at least at times, in other words, is "the rationalisation of popular belief."[437]

This is not of course the only way to interpret the passage and attempts have been made to reconcile the Aristotelian statements about physiognomy with the pseudo-Aristotelian treatise, the *Physiognomonica*, in a way that limits the 'hypothetical' problem that Lloyd sets. Vogt has argued that the conditional nature of Aristotle's statements in the *An. pr.* is limited and points out that the passage itself is predominantly in the indicative mood. The physiognomical correlations in the *Hist. anim.* noted by Lloyd are brought to bear here. Such assertions, so Vogt argues, would

---

[433] τὸ δὲ φυσιογωμονεῖν δυνατόν ἐστιν εἴ τις δίδωσιν ἅμα μεταβάλλειν τὸ σῶμα καὶ τὴν ψυχὴν ὅσα φυσικά ἐστι παθήματα (μαθὼν γὰρ ἴσως μουσικὴν μεταβέβληκέ τι τὴν ψυχήν, ἀλλ' οὐ τῶν φύσει ἡμῖν ἐστὶ τοῦτο τὸ πάθος, ἀλλ' οἷον ὀργαὶ καὶ ἐπιθυμίαι τῶν φύσει κινήσεων). εἰ δὴ τοῦτό τε δοθείη καὶ ἓν ἑνὸς σημεῖον εἶναι, καὶ δυναίμεθα λαμβάβειν τὸ ἴδιον ἑκάστου γένους πάθος καὶ σημεῖον, δυνησόμεθα φυσιογνωμονεῖν (*An. pr.* 2.27, 70^{b}7-14).

[434] Lloyd (1983) 22-23, and also 23 n.50, "Elsewhere Aristotle himself remarked critically on the lengths to which one physiognomist went in reducing all human faces to those of two or three animals, see *GA* 769b20ff."; cf., Tsouna (1988) 178, who also makes the conditional aspect of the passage clear. Ross (1951) 41 objects to this passage on the grounds that it is not clear that Aristotle anywhere refers specifically to human beings.

[435] Lloyd (1983) 23. The relevant passages from the *Hist. anim.* are as follows: 1.8, 491^{b}-12-14; 1.8, 491^{b}14-18; 1.8, 491^{b}23-26; 1.9, 492^{a}1-4; 1.9, 492^{a}7f.; 1.9, 492^{a}8-10; 1.9, 492^{a}10-12; 1.11, 492^{a}30-34; 1.11, 492^{a}34-^{b}3; 1.15, 494^{a}16-18. The *Hist. anim.* also contains various characterizations of different animals; these passages are not necessarily physiognomic, though they reflect associations between character types and animals that might be useful to the physognomist: 1.8, 488^{b}12-25; 9.1, 608^{a}11-21; 9.1, 608^{a}21-^{b}18; 9.3, 610^{b}20-22; 9.3-42; 9.44, 629^{b}5-8; 9.44, 629^{b}8-10; 9.46, 63-^{b}18-22. I am greatly indebted to Vogt for the compilation of both these lists. In addition to listing the passages, Vogt (1999) 134-144, painstakingly provides the relevant details from them as well as including any points of comparison with the *Physiognomonica*.

[436] Lloyd (1983) 24.

[437] Lloyd (1983) 202. I want to emphasize here that I am presenting things in a simplified form. Lloyd does not see the Greek scientific writers as doing nothing more than justifying common prejudices. An example may help to clarify: "The development of zoological taxonomy illustrates very clearly the continued influence of widely held Greek beliefs about the animal kingdom and about man's position in relation to it. But it also exemplifies how Aristotle, deeply influenced as he was by such beliefs, adapted or even transformed what he took over" Lloyd (1983) 204.

have to be brought into doubt if one cannot admit the actual validity of Aristotle's conditions at the end of the second book of the *An. pr.*[438] Aristotle, in other words, would not make such statements in the *Hist. anim.* only to undo them in the *An. pr.* One ought instead to look to the beginning of the *Physiognomonica*—probably composed during the 3rd century, some 100 years after the death of Aristotle—for confirmation of the Aristotelian statement:[439]

> That minds follow their bodies and are not apart from the changes to their bodies becomes quite clear during illness and drunkenness; for the state of the mind seems to change with the experiences of the body. And, moreover, the body is clearly affected by the experiences of the soul, for example, in love, fear, sorrow, and pleasure. [...] There has never been an animal that has the appearance of one animal, but the mind of another; the body and the soul are always of the same animal so that the one sort of mind always attends the same sort of body. And, in fact, experts of a given animal to judge them on the basis of their appearance, just like a horseman with horses, and a dog-handler with dogs. If these things are true—and they always are—it is possible to practise physiognomy.[440]

Especial attention has been paid to the final statement: "If these things are true—and they always are—it is possible to practise physiognomy." It is supposed that the author of this portion of the *Physiognomonica*, Tract A, has read his Aristotle, and the *An. pr.* in particular, very closely. The parenthesis within the final sentence of the introductory paragraph—"they are always are—is to be understood, according to Vogt, as confirmation of what Aristotle has left unsaid.[441] Awareness of Aristotle's omission and attempting to correct or at least make up for it do not of course guarantee that one is any closer to what Aristotle actually thought. As Sassi puts it, "I cannot say whether Aristotle is concerned here with giving a theoretical foundation to a criterion already in wide use among those practicing the discipline (to which he nevertheless does not refer) or whether it was the author(s) of the pseudo-Aristotelian text who found the

---

[438] Vogt (1999) 122-124. cf., Evans (1969) 7, who also sees the *Physiognomonica* confirming the statements in the *Anal. pr.*

[439] On the date of composition for the *Physiognomonica*, see Barton (2002 [1994]) 101 and Tsouna (1998) 177.

[440] Ὅτι αἱ διάνοιαι ἔπονται τοῖς σώμασι, καὶ οὐκ εἰσὶν αὐταὶ καθ' ἑαυτὰς ἀπαθεῖς οὖσαι, τῶν τοῦ σώματος κινήσεων. τοῦτο δὲ δῆλον πάνυ γίνεται ἔν τε ταῖς μέθαις καὶ ἐν ταῖς ἀρρωστίαις· πολὺ γὰρ ἐξαλλάττουσαι φαίνονται αἱ διάωοιαι ὑπὸ τῶν τοῦ σώματος παθημάτων. καὶ τοὐναντίον δὴ τοῖς τῆς ψυχῆς παθήμασι τὸ σῶμα συμπάσχον φανερὸν γίνεται περί τε τοὺς ἔρωτας καὶ τοὺς φόβους τε καὶ τὰς λύπας καὶ τὰς ἡδονάς. [...] ἔτι δὲ καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ζῴων οἱ περὶ ἕκαστον ἐπιστήμονες ἐκ τῆς ἰδέας δύνανται θεωρεῖν, ἱππικοί τε ἵππους καὶ κυνηγέται κύνας. εἰ δὲ ταῦτα ἀληθῆ εἴη (ἀεὶ δὲ ταῦτα ἀληθῆ ἐστίν), εἴη ἂν φυσιογνωμονεῖν (Pseud.-Arist. *Phys.* 805^{a}1-18).

[441] Vogt (1999) 124.

theme in Aristotle and emphasized its importance in relation to physiognomical analysis."[442] All that can really be said of the passage from the *Physiognomonica*, then, is that it is Aristotelian. Or, perhaps, that the treatise's author is attempting to legitimate his work by placing himself within the Aristotelian tradition.

In that regard, however, further difficulty is encountered with the pseudo-Aristotelian claim. Aristotle, as I noted above, introduces his comments on the feasibility of physiognomic interpretation as an example of enthymeme. But, as Sassi explains, Aristotle "defines [enthymeme], at the beginning of the *Prior Analytics*, as a rhetorical syllogism, that is, one that results in persuasion rather than knowledge, for instance, because it is based on premises that are merely probable."[443] That conclusions drawn from physiognomic interpretation are correct is thus viewed as (perhaps highly) probable by Aristotle, but not guaranteed. The pseudo-Aristotelian claim that 'these things are always true' is not therefore strictly Aristotelian, but pseudo-Aristotelian. Had Aristotle believed that 'these things are always true', in other words, he would not have introduced physiognomy as an example of enthymeme. But the confirmation of the Aristotelian conditions by the pseudo-Aristotelian *Physiognomonica* is not the only way in which the issue can be approached, and it will perhaps be more useful to examine just why Aristotle, if he did not doubt the validity of his conditions, chose not to say so.

Vogt has argued that Aristotle treats physiognomic interpretation, at least in terms of comparisons between humans and animals, as 'self-evident'.[444] Aristotle does not treat the conditions in the *An. pr.* in detail because "this condition was so self-evident that Aristotle did not think it worth mentioning."[445] The author(s) of the *Physiognomonica* is thus able to assume this same self-evident quality when making the statement 'these things are always true'. But this reference to a 'self-evident' cultural

[442] Sassi (2001 [1988]) 74.
[443] Sassi (2001 [1988]) 71.
[444] Vogt (1999) 124, "selbstverständlich."
[445] Vogt (1999) 125: "diese Voraussetzung so selbstverständlichwar, daß er sie nicht für der Rede wert hielt."

construct, seems rather similar to Lloyd's "popular belief or folklore."[446] This congruity or agreement on the point of commonly accepted values in turn recalls the pattern of physiognomic associations that were discussed starting with Homer. It must be made clear, moreover, that before the formalization of physiognomy in treatises such as the Peripatetic *Physiognomonica*, the discipline was in fact already in practise. As Barton observes, some "systematization had taken place [by the time of Aristotle], for Aristotle mentions a physiognomist who had reduced his system to one of analogy with only two or three animal types."[447] If we accept Lloyd's interpretation, the treatises are to some extent merely the 'rationalisation' of an already common practice that evidently managed without the actual treatises.

The interpretation of the physical descriptions in Suetonius' *Caesares*, however, has been quite technical and would not be possible in the way that previous scholars have imagined without the appropriate treatises. The first step was taken by Misener, who attempted to determine the origins of the physical descriptions.

On the basis of their supposed level of detail, Misener judges Suetonius' physical descriptions 'iconistic' (*iconicus*) or 'photographic'. Suetonius' descriptions of the emperors' appearance, in other words, are the literary equivalent of an accurate and realistic photograph. According to Misener, the earliest examples of such descriptions come from legal papyri of Egyptian-Greek documents.[448] As Misener moves forward in time, the cultural milieu of Aristotle and the Peripatetics and its interest in the individual is used to buttress the claim for the Greek invention of the iconistic description.[449] Suetonius' use of the 'iconistic' description, as Misener conceives it, is a natural result of Leo's reconstruction of Alexandrian biography. Plutarch does not employ it, for he is "too great a master of style," and the "dry" iconistic description

[446] Cf., Barton (2002 [1994]) 96, "I think that in the Greco-Roman world…it is clear that physiognomical thinking has very deep cultural roots."
[447] Barton (2002 [1994]) 101.
[448] Misener (1924) 101. See also Fürst (1902), who suggests that the descriptions are of native Egyptian provenance; Misener encounters some difficulty here as she acknowledges that there is no evidence for the Greek use of such descriptions in a legal context outside of Greek Egypt. "Peculiar conditions" are the only reason provided for the practice within Egypt.
[449] Misener (1924) 107.

does not suit the ethical interests of his Peripatetic biography.[450] Suetonius, on the other hand, writes "the detached external type of biography of the Alexandrian school, a faithful and accurate compilation of all the known facts, unilluminated by personal judgment. [..] The iconistic photograph is in harmony both with the spirit and form of the Suetonian biography."[451]

Like Misener, Evans accepts Suetonius' inheritance of Leo's Alexandrian tradition. And as an inheritor of this tradition, it is only natural that Suetonius writes iconistic descriptions.[452] Evans accordingly appropriates Misener's iconistic descriptions[453] and finds "striking parallelism" between the ideas and expressions in Suetonius' physical descriptions and the statements in the pseudo-Aristotelian *Physiognomonica* as well as the physiognomic treatise of Suetonius' contemporary Polemo of Laodicaea.[454] According to Evans, Suetonius "laid particular emphasis on certain aspects of the physique, which from the point of view of the physiognomists indicate either the virtuous or vicious nature of an emperor's character."[455] Eustathius' fragmentary epitome of Suetonius' lost Περὶ Βλασφημιῶν, parts of which appear to derive from the pseudo-Aristotelian treatise, is adduced as additional evidence for Suetonius' adherence to physiognomic precepts.[456] Finally, Evans suggests that part of Suetonius' motivation for including the personal descriptions was the influence of

[450] Misener (1924) 110; cf., Leo (1901) 146. The fact that most of Peripatetic biography is unavailable for confirmation is more or less ignored.
[451] Misener (1924) 118.
[452] Evans (1935) 63.
[453] Evans (1935) 44-45 and 75-77, posits two other types of description, the "permanent" and the "emotional." The permanent is the most common, "is of the simplest sort, yet briefly suggests the unchanging excellence of body and character," and may be as brief as *corpus ingens* (52). The second category is subdivided; it may appear in panegyric or invective, in which case the description the description is actually "permanent," or on occasions when the "momentary" appearance of the subject requires comment. Whichever option within this second category is invoked, the emphasis is on emotion as revealed by the subject's body language or, and especially, facial expression, e.g., *laeto voltu*. This second category is ill-defined. It is suggested that its focus is on "the dignity of appearance, the tranquility of the countenance, and the nobility of the eyes." But these need not represent any emotion. Dignity and nobility can be qualities, tranquility a(n emotional) state. Dion's *magna corporis dignitas*, for example, does not necessarily betray any particular emotion on Dion's part—though his viewer's appearance may differ (Nepos *Dion* 10.1.2; Evans (1935) 75, places this in the second category of the panegryic/invective, permanent type). The case for a "momentary" description is not much more clear. If an individual is said to be *truci voltu*, this may or may not in fact be "momentary"—for that depends on the individual's actual disposition; the subject in this case might be *trux* all (or at least most of) the time or just this once—and it is not necessarily an emotion.
[454] Evans (1935) 63.
[455] Evans (1935) 63.
[456] Evans (1935) 62.

portrait sculpture.[457] Though I have already argued that physiognomy does not provide a satisfactory interpretation of the physical descriptions in the *Caesares*, it may be worthwhile to explore some of the problems with the way in which Evans' formulates her version of physiognomy.

The first difficulty is the 'iconistic' portrait. According to Gross, an iconistic portrait is one that satisfies the demands of type. The statue of an athlete, for example, would be iconistic to the extent that it presented its subject in a suitably athletic pose. The only modern, portrait-like feature of such a statue would be found in the accurate representation of its subject's own limbs.[458] The point of the iconistic portrait, in other words, was not replicate the appearance of its subject in photographic or realistic detail. In this context, if Suetonius' descriptions of the emperors are iconistic, they are written to some sort of Imperial type whose purpose is not necessarily the accurate reproduction of an emperor's features. And if, moreover, the features Suetonius reports are not accurate, there is little point in interpreting them physiognomically.

Somewhat related to the question of the 'iconistic' description, Evan's claim portrait statuary's influence on Suetonius' physical descriptions also merits consideration. Her view is reflected in some recent work on Roman portrait sculpture in which direct correlations between surviving portraits of the emperors and the Suetonian descriptions are assumed. Where there is discrepancy between statue and text, as in the case of Augustus, this is taken as proof of an idealizing style on the part of the sculptor, whereas congruence between statue and text, as with Vespasian, reveals the sculptor's verism.[459] Suetonius' objectivity and correctness are assumed in

---

[457] Evans (1935) 63.

[458] Gross (1969) 67. It is worth nothing here that Suetonius uses *iconicus* only once: *in templo simulacrum stabat aureum iconicum amiciebaturque cotidie veste, quali ipse uteretur* (*Cal*. 22.3). By Gross' argument, the adjective here denotes the pose of the statue, not necessarily any direct relation to Caligula's actual appearance (this would explain, in part, the information regarding the statue's raiment to the extent that it helped to increase the recognition of the statue as Caligula).

[459] Kleiner (1992): For Augustus, see 62; other idealized portraits are Tiberius (to an extent), 124; Caligula, 127; and Domitian (to an extent), 177. For Vespasian, see 172; other veristic portraits are those of Caesar, 45; Claudius, 131; Nero, 138; Galba, 168; Otho, 169; and Vitellius, 169. It should be noted that Kleiner runs into difficulty with Tiberius and Domitian. They feature veristic elements without being entirely veristic (in Kleiner's Suetonian sense). According to Kleiner, Tiberius' image, though idealized, has the unnaturally large eyes attributed him by Suetonius; Domitian is

both instances. But the two representations—textual and plastic—are perhaps better thought of as being independent from one another rather than interdependent. As Smith has observed, the portrait statues of the Roman emperors relied on the "repetition of certain key details" rather than strict adherence to a particular model in order to establish the identity of their subjects. It was not impossible for two very different looking statues to depict the same individual while statues of similar appearance might actually represent different men.[460] Aside from the "key details," whose appearance was not absolute, other details of Suetonius' descriptions, for example, the manner of dress, are also unlikely to have had much relation to imperial statuary. "Roman emperors had no distinguishing dress, attributes, or statue types to set them apart from others. Quite the contrary, the imperial image worked hard to express the idea that the emperor was not in principle a different kind of person from other citizens."[461] The practice of recycling statues, in which the old head was removed for the new one, presents yet another obstacle to the accuracy of Roman portrait sculpture.[462] For the potential mixture of more than one individual's features naturally reduces the reliability of the portrait sculptures as a source. There is, moreover, a number of elements within the physical descriptions which would not have been reflected by the sculptural portraiture for reasons of impracticality or convention, for example, the colors of the eyes or the hairiness of Caligula's body.

Finally, there are Evans' more specifically physiognomic arguments. The first is the presence of Suetonius' contemporary Polemo, a student of both Dio Chrysostom and Timocrates (adherents to physiognomy both), a sometime member of Hadrian's court, and himself an author of a physiognomic treatise.[463] It is certainly possible that Suetonius and Polemo had a face-to-face meeting (with each, presumably, scrutinizing the other's appearance), but the argument is circumstantial and can only have merit in

---

simply not quite as bald as he should be. Note also that idealized sculptures would have concealed many of the physical blemishes which Suetonius tends to report.

[460] Smith (1996) 32. The hair is an especially important "key detail"; cf., Kleiner (1992) 8.

[461] Smith (1996) 33.

[462] See Wardman (1967) 414-415, and 414n.6. See also Smith (1996) 37, on early imperial portraiture; only the head would have been replicated for additional copies of the original statue, and Kleiner (1992) 10 and 13-14, who points out that the features of a current emperor's portrait would often incorporate some features of his predecessor.

[463] Evans (1935) 61 and (1969) 279-280.

the context of other and greater evidence. The only other external evidence Evans provides is the fragment from Suetonius' lost Περὶ Βλασφημιῶν. As Wardle has observed, in addition to the fact that it is not just a fragment, but the fragment of an epitome, to which Evans refers, even if one could vouch for the accurate transcription of Suetonius' words, the entire sentiment is qualified by a 'perhaps' or ἴσως that "may suggest a general reflection, rather than familiarity with the technical literature, and even some hesitation about the idea."[464] Until the fragment can be fleshed out, it is therefore inadvisable to place too much weight upon it in evaluating the evidence available for Suetonius' adherence to physiognomy.

The first physiognomic idea we encountered at the beginning of this survey was that of "physiognomic equivalence." This was a simple and straightforward idea in which the beautiful signified the good, and the ugly bad. As one moves forward in time from Homer the association persists, though it might occasionally be challenged by someone like Archilochus. Archilochus though often objects vociferously to any number of things and so his deviance is probably safely marginalized. Most individuals throughout these periods would likely have readily accepted the conceptual pairing of the beautiful and the good. With the philosophers one begins to encounter a greater level of technical sophistication. At this level of interpretation a certain, and unusual, degree of expertise is required. As Sassi and Gleason argue, moreover, physiognomy became maximalist in its approach by the time of Suetonius and Polemo.[465] There was virtually no aspect of a person's appearance, behavior, or conduct from which the physiognomists did not claim the ability to determine not merely an individual's character, but even his or her future. Aside from raising a few fundamental issues, I have therefore omitted the rather lengthy lists of physical features and their associated character traits that are found in the physiognomical treatises (and of course other texts such as Aristotle's *Historia animalium*).

[464] Wardle (1994) 324. the passage is as follows: βυσαύχην ὁ ἐπιβουλευτικς καὶ ἴσως φυσιογνωμονικῶς ἐρρέθη ὡς ἀπὸ ζώων ὅσα λοχῶντα ἢ ἄλλως θυμούμενα σιμοῦσι τοὺς αὐχένας ἐν τῷ μέλλειν ἐμπηδᾶν.
[465] Sassi (2001 [1988]); Gleason (1995), esp. pp. 21-54.

With that said, it should be emphasized that the lists are quite long. And as Barton has observed of Polemo's physiognomical treatise, "[i]f the boy-pupil succeeds in 'learning his letters,' he will hardly be in a position to read a coherent message from the bodies set before him as a result of reading Polemo's book."[466] Such a situation forces the issue of the presence of physiognomic ideas throughout art and literature. Unless all the responsible artists were expertly trained and practically experienced, it seems reasonable to return to the idea of popular beliefs or, even, general 'physiognomic' equivalences that do not suggest the level of expertise that previous interpretations of the physical descriptions in the *Caesares* require.

[466] Barton (2002 [1994]) 110. See also, Dean-Jones (2003) 109ff. on medical treatises: "Even if a lay reader could assimilate all this detail from the text alone, to be able to apply it he had also to learn how each sign was affected by the patient's age, sex, constitution, and habits and appearance when healthy. […] So even here, where the author is able to write down with impressive clarity a comprehensive list of symptoms that a doctor should look for, it still falls far short of the practical experience of working at the side of a competent doctor."

The Descriptions of the Emperors

For convenience's sake, I provide the texts of Suetonius' descriptions of the emperors in the *Caesares.* Interested readers may also find Canter's summaries of these descriptions, as well as those provided by other authors all the way to Theodosius II, useful:[467]

> *Iul.* 45.1-3: Fuisse traditur excelsa statura, colore candido, teretibus membris, ore paulo pleniore, nigris vegetisque oculis. valitudine prospera, nisi quod tempore extremo repente animo linqui atque etiam per somnum exterreri solebat. comitiali quoque morbo bis inter res agendas correptus est. [2] circa corporis curam morosior, ut non solum tonderetur diligenter ac raderetur, sed velleretur etiam, ut quidam exprobraerunt, calvitii vero deformitatem iniquissime ferret, saepe obtrectatorum iocis obnoxiam expertus. ideoque et deficientem capillum revocare a vertice adsueverat et ex omnibus decretis sibi a senatu populoque honoribus non aliud aut recepit aut usurpavit libentius quam ius laureae coronae perpetuo gestandae. [3] etiam cultu notabilem ferunt; usum enim lato clavo ad manus fimbriato nec umquam aliter quam ut super eum cingeretur, et quidem fluxiore cinctura; unde emanasse Sullae dictum optimates saepius admonentis, ut male praecinctum puerum caverent.
>
> *Aug.* 79.1-2: Forma fuit eximia et per omnes aetatis gradus venustissima, quamquam et omnis lenocinii negelegens... vultu erat vel in sermone vel tacitus adeo tranquillo serenoque...[2] oculos habuit claros ac nitidos, quibus etiam existimari volebat inesse quiddam divini vigoris, gaudebatque, si qui sibi acrius contuenti quasi ad fulgorem soli vultum summitteret; sed in senecta sinistro minus vidit; dentes raros et exiguos et scabros; capillum leviter inflexum et subflavum; supercilia coniuncta; mediocres aures; nasum et a summo ementiorem, et ab imo deductiorem; colorem inter aquilum candidumque; staturam brevem...sed quae commoditate et aequitate memborum occuleretur, ut non nisi ex comparatione astantis alicuius procerioris intellegi posset.
>
> *Tib.* 68-1-3: Corpore fuit amplo atque robusto, statura quae iustum excederet; latus ab umberis et pectore, ceteris quoque membris usque ad imos pedes aequalis et congruens; sinistra manu agiliore ac validiore, articulis ita firmis, ut recens et integrum malum digito terebraret, caput pueri vel etiam adulescentis talitro vulneraret. [2] colore erat candido, capillo pone occipitium summissiore

[467] Canter (1928) 385-399.

ut cervicem etiam obtegeret, quod gentile in illo videbatur; facie honesta, in qua tamen crebri et subiti tumores, cum praegrandibus oculis et qui, quod mirum esset, noctu etiam et in tenebris viderent, sed ad breve et cum primum e somno patuissent; deinde rursum hebescebant. [3] incedebat cervice rigida et obstipa, adducto fere vultu, plerumque tacitus, nullo aut rarissimo etiam cum proximis sermone eoque tarissimo, nec sine molli quadam digitorum gesticulatione. quae omnia ingrata atque arrogantiae plena et animadvertit Augustus in eo et excusare temptavit saepe apud senatum ac populum professus naturae vitia esse, non animi.

Cal. 50.1-3: Statura fuit eminenti, colore expallido, corpore enormi, gracilitate maxima cervicis et crurum, oculis et temporibus concavis, fronte lata et torva, capillo et circa verticem nullo, hirsutus cetera. quare transeunte eo prospicere ex superiore parte aut omnino quacumque de causa capram nominare, criminosum et exitiale habebatur. vultum vero natura horridum ac taetrum etiam ex industria efferabat componens ad speculum in omnem terrorem ac formidinem. [2] valitudo ei neque corporis neque animi constitit. puer comitiali morbo vexatus, in adulescentia ita patiens laborum erat, ut tamen nonnumquam subita defectione ingredi, stare, colligere semet vis posset... [3] incitabatur insomnio maxime...

Cal. 52: Vestitu calciatuque et cetero habitu neque patrio neque civili, ac ne virili quidem ac denique humano semper usus est.

Claud. 30: Auctoritas dignitasque formae non defuit ei, verum stanti vel sedenti at praecipue quiescenti, nam ex prolixo nex exili corpore erat et specie canitieque pulchra, opimis cervicibus; ceterum et ingredientem destituebat poplites minus firmi, et remisse quid vel serio agentem multa dehonestabant; risus indecens, ira turpior spumante ructu, umentibus naribus, praeterea linguae titubantia caputque cum semper tum in quantulocumeque actu vel maxime tremulum.

Nero 51: Statura fuit prope iusta, corpore maculoso et fetido, subflavo capillo, vultu pulchro magis quam venusto, oculis caesis et hebetioribus, cervice obesa, ventre proiecto, gracillimis cruribus, valitudine prospera; nam qui luxuriae immoderatissimae esset, ter omnino per quattuordecim annos languit, atque ita ut neque vino neque consuetudine reliqua abstineret; circum cultum habitumque adeo pudendus, ut comam semper in gradus formatam peregrinatione Achaica etiam pone verticem summiserit ac plerumque synthesinam indutus ligato circum collum sudario prodierit in publicum sine cinctu et discalciatus.

Galb. 21: Statura fuit iusta, capite praecalvo, oculis caeruleis, adunco naso,

manibus pedibusque articulari morbo distortissimis, ut neque calceum perpeti neque libellos evolvere aut tenere omnino valeret, excreverat etiam in dexteriore latere eius caro praependebatque adeo ut aegre fascia substringeretur.

Otho 12.1: Tanto Othonis animo nequaquam corpus aut habitus competit. fuisse enim et modicae staturae et male pedatus scambusque traditur, munditiarum vero paene muliebrum, vulso corpore, galericulo capiti propter raritatem capillorum adaptato et adnexo, ut nemo dinosceret; quin et facie cotidie rasitare ac pane madido linere consuetum, idque instituisse a prima lanugine, ne barbartus umquam esset; sacra etiam Isidis saepe in lintea religiosaque veste propalam celebrasse.

Vit. 17.2: parte vulgi etiam corporis vitia exprobrante; erat enim in eo enormis proceritas, facies rubida plerumque ex vinolentia, venter obesus, alterum femur subdebile impulsu olim quadrigae, cum auriganti Gaio ministratorem exhiberet.

Vesp. 20: Statura fuit quadrata, compactis firmisque membris, vultu veluti nitentis... alitudine prosperrima usus est...

Tit. 3.1: in puero statim corporis animique dotes explenduerunt, magisque ac magis deinceps per aetatis gradus: forma egregia et cui non minus auctoritas inesset quam gratiae, praecipuum robur, quamquam neque procera statura et ventre paulo proiectiore.

Dom. 18.1-2: Statura fuit procera, vultu modesto ruborisque pleno, grandibus oculis, verum acie hebetiore; praeterea pulcher ac decens, maxime in iuventa, et quidem toto corpore exceptis pedibus, quorum digitos restrictiores habebat; postea calvitio quoque deformis et obestitate ventris et crurum gracilitate, quae tamen ei valitudine longa remacruerant... [2] calvitio ita offendebatur, ut in contumeliam suam traheret, si cui alii ioco vel iurgio obiectaretur...

Appendix B

Syme once observed that it "was the way of thought of the ancients to conceive a man's inner nature as something definable and immutable."[468] Though this view reflects the generally accepted interpretation of the ancient conception of character even today, it is not uncontroversial. Even when it is accepted, there may be qualifications. Swain, for example, has argued that the Greek biographer Plutarch accepts the possibility of a change in character under certain conditions. Plutarch's difficulty in the *Life of Sertorius* is to determine whether Sertorius was a genuinely good man who somehow became bad, or if his virtues were simply an act. Swain's conclusion is that Plutarch believes Sertorius was in fact genuinely good, but that the intervention of τυχή so overwhelmed him that "the permanent balance of his soul" changed.[469] One might argue, however, that Plutarch is still maintaining a belief in static or immutable character. Sertorius was essentially good until the force of τυχή turned him essentially bad.

Suetonius' endorsement of static character, on the other hand, seems reasonably straightforward. There is practically no evidence that any of the emperors whose lives the biographer relates in the *Caesares* change, for better or for worse. Even the 'phased' *Lives* of Tiberius and Domitian that present a process of 'degeneration' seem really to be an exercise in the revelation of the emperors' character. And in the case of Titus, who was expected to be 'another Nero' prior to his accession, Suetonius says that it finally turned out that no vice was discovered in the emperor, but on the contrary, the most supreme virtues.[470] Titus, in other words, was always good. It just seemed for a time that he was not. The problem was one of perception and discovery, not character.

Examples that suggest the possibility that a person's character could be modified or controlled—if not wholly changed—are, on the other hand, in evidence in

[468] Syme (1958) 421.
[469] Swain (1989) 68.
[470] *denique propalam alium Neronem et opinabantur et praedicabant. At illi ea fama pro bono cessit conversaque est in maximas laudes neque vitio ullo reperto et contra virtutibus summis* (*Tit*. 7.1).

Suetonius. In Tiberius' letter to the senate, the emperor warns that august body to beware the possibility that a person 'could be changed by some random chance'.[471] Tiberius clearly does not see himself as a prisoner of his character by this statement, and Suetonius himself finds nothing objectionable about the emperor's comments on this particular point. In the *Caligula*, the biographer observes that Tiberius indulged his eventual successor's penchant for song and dance in the hope that 'his savage nature could be softened by these activities'.[472] And again, Suetonius does not suggest that Tiberius was somehow in the wrong for attempting to remedy Caligula's faults. Hurley's interpretation of Augustus' letters regarding Claudius, however, brings us to what I think is the crux of the question of character in Suetonius' *Caesares*. According to Hurley, Claudius' physical disabilities were perceived by his family as character flaws. Their problem, however, was not the flaws as such, but whether or not Claudius could be made to control them in a way that make him presentable.[473]

There are, in other words, two different questions: Claudius' character, and what can be done about it. The practicality expressed by Augustus' letters—just what was the imperial family to do about Claudius—suggests the question of character was not of primary importance. In a similar vein, it makes sense to ask whether or not character as such is Suetonius' primary concern in the *Caesares*. When we consider four of the words that might potentially refer to character in Suetonius—*ingenium*, *animus*, *mens*, and *natura*—I would suggest that character as such is not in fact what the biographer is pursuing.

In Suetonian usage *ingenium* seems generally to denote an individual's skill-set or aptitudes rather than anything fundamental, as seen in the *Vitellius* and Suetonius' comments on the 'gift for flattery' that Vitellius' father possessed.[474] The second term, *animus*, typically represents the conscious or active mind of the individual, perhaps

---

[471] *sed exempli causa cavendum esse, ne se senatus in acta cuiusquam obligaret, quia aliquo casu mutari posset* (*Tib*. 67.3).
[472] *scaenicas saltandi canendique artes studiosissime appeteret, facile id sane Tiberio patiente, si per has mansuefieri posset ferum eius ingenium* (*Cal*. 11).
[473] Hurley (2001) 74ff.
[474] *Jul*. 3; *Aug*. 56.1, 86.2, 86.3, 89.3; *Cal*. 3.1, 11, 27.1, 34.2, 37.1; *Nero* 2.3, 39.3; *Vit*. 2.5; *Ves*. 17; *Tit*. 1; *Dom*. 3.2, 20. Note that I am not suggesting that *ingenium* cannot refer character, only that it need not do so exclusively.

even his will.[475] Usage can be general, marking a basic separation between the physical and the mental, and this is the meaning Suetonius usually adopts in the portraits. A subject's *animus* is mentioned four times in the context of physical appearance, apropos Caesar, Caligula, Titus, and Domitian.[476] Caesar's example clearly refers to his epilepsy and loss of consciousness during fits, *repente animo linqui*. The related term *mens* is used primarily to describe some sort of mental disturbance or infirmity that is at least implied to be temporary.[477] It is not generally used of the emperors, but is most closely associated with Caligula when it is. This is not the place to debate the emperor's alleged insanity. My point is simply that *mens* does not refer to some abstract quality of character.

The best candidate for 'character' in Suetonius appears to be *natura*.[478] In excusing some of his eventual successor's irksome habits, for example, Augustus describes them as *naturae vitia*, not *animi vitia*.[479] The faults are pardonable because Tiberius does not manifest them consciously or deliberately as part of the functioning of his *animus*. The implication of this defense is that a person cannot be 'blamed' for their *natura*, and in this context, it is worth asking whether *natura* or character as such is Suetonius' primary concern.

The biographer's usage of the term does not, moreover, appear to be holistic. He may say something like 'Tiberius was savage by *natura*,' but that is hardly all that Tiberius is. Suetonius has merely provided an indication of one particular facet of the man's make-up. And it is should be noted in the above example, that no one accepted Augustus' excuse. People thought that Tiberius deliberately behaved in an offensive manner. This suggests, in other words, that they believed Tiberius could control his quirks, so let me briefly review some recent scholarship on the question of ancient

---

[475] *Jul*. 33, 45.1, 46, 75.5, 82.4; *Aug*. 35.4, 51.1, 56.1, 66.2, 83, 86.1, 98.1, 98.5; *Tib*. 7.2, 12.3, 25.3, 49.1, 67.4; *Cal*. 3.1, 3.3, 32.1, 38.1, 50.2, 56.1; *Cla*. 1.4, 2.1, 4.5, 15.1, 16.1; *Nero* 23.3, 32.1, 42.1, 47.2, 48.1, 53; *Otho* 3.1, 5.1, 6.1, 6.3, 8.1; *Vit*. 7.3, 15.3; *Ves*. 5.6; *Tit*. 3.1, 9.3; *Dom*. 12.3, 18.2 (2x).
[476] *Jul*. 45.1; *Cal*. 50.2; *Tit*. 3.1; *Dom*. 18.2.
[477] *Jul*. 49.2; *Aug*. 19.2, 48, 99.2 (2x); *Tib*. 28, 66, 67.3; *Cal*. 50.2, 51.1, 60; *Nero* 41.2.
[478] *Jul*. 74.1; *Aug*. 67; *Tib*. 44.1, 57.1, 59.1, 68.3; *Cal*. 1.2, 11, 29.1, 50.1; *Cla*. 34.1; *Nero* 7.1, 26.1, 28.1, 48.1; *Vit*. 16.3; *Ves*. 16.3; *Tit*. 8.1; *Dom*. 3.2.
[479] *Quae omnia ingrata atque arrogantiae plena et animadvertit Augustus in eo et excusare temptavit saepe apud senatum ac populum professus naturae vitia esse, non animi* (*Tib*. 68.3).

thought on the individual's ability to control his or her behavior in the context of the problem of character.

Gill has recently argued for the 'holistic' sense of the self—what he terms 'the structured self'—as it would have developed under Greek thinkers of the Hellenistic period and then been continued by such Epicurean and Stoic (Roman) thinkers as Lucretius and Seneca. The holism that Gill finds in such philosophers is contrasted with the notion of the divided self maintained by the Platonists—e.g., rational vs. irrational, mental vs. physical—that results in "independent sources of motivation." Gill attributes three broad claims to the 'holists': "[H]appiness is 'up to us' (implying that it is also 'open to us') through virtue and rational reflection in a way that is not constrained by our inborn nature, upbringing, or social situation. [H]appiness involves a time-independent perfection of character. [O]nly the fully rational and virtuous (or wise) person is fully integrated or coherent while non-wise people are relatively incoherent and lead incoherent lives."[480]

In the specific context of the *Caesares*, the relevance of Gill's work centers on the question of control. What, that is, Suetonius can reasonably be thought to have expected the emperor to have under his control or be capable of influencing—what, in other words, is 'up to' to the emperor—irrespective of attendant factors such as "inborn nature, upbringing, or social situation."[481] The primary objection to such an approach might be in finding clear evidence for Stoic or Epicurean thought in the *Caesares.* Suetonius does not, for example, delve into Claudius' tendency towards anger in the manner of Seneca's *de Ira*.[482] While Claudius' awareness (*conscius*) of this failing might seem consistent with Stoic orthodoxy concerning the passions, and in fact is consistent

[480] Gill (2006) xvii. Stoic belief in the mutability of character is not uncontroversial. As Long (1971) 184-185 has observed, however, what the Stoics objected to in this regard was "the possibility of acting inconsistently with present character."

[481] See also Montiglio (2008) 168-180. Although Montiglio works independently of Gill, and her concern is Seneca's comments about memory rather than the 'self' as such, she nonetheless isolates a feature of (Stoic) memory that is complementary to our discussion: Seneca's conception of the use of memory is 'voluntaristic' or subject to the individual's will. The use of memory—how one chooses to evoke a memory; what one chooses to remember; and one's attitude towards a memory—is 'up to' to the individual.

[482] It should be noted on this point that Claudius is the only emperor to whom Suetonius assigns a rubric on anger.

with Gill's holistic 'structured self,'[483] the progression of the rubric itself makes clear that the biographer's concern is Claudius' anger as it relates to the daily business of his being emperor. With each new episode of anger, Claudius' administration becomes less effective, the laws more poorly upheld (*Claud*. 38). This is a practical rather than a philosophical question, beneath which we may place the general issues raised by Gill's arguments. For the focus on the consequences of Claudius' anger in the context of his self-awareness brings us to Claudius himself, not his *ira* as such. It is 'up to' Claudius to control and so mitigate his *ira* and its deleterious effects on those around him.

By contrast, and as Gill demonstrates, Plutarch's *Lives* fit rather seamlessly into a Platonic-Aristotelian model of the self. The Greek biographer's subjects are men "whose exceptional natural capacity is not supported by good education or social environment, and [who], as a result, never realize the goodness of character which lies within their potential."[484] To the extent that Suetonius is concerned with what is 'up to' the emperor, one might describe him as non-Plutarchean (or non-Platonic-Aristotelian) in the sense that his emphasis on the decisions of the mature adult irrespective of factors such as childhood. This need not, however, make Suetonius a doctrinally orthodox Epicurean or Stoic. The biographers' subjects are, after all, the emperors of Rome. There is no rubric in which they are not the center of attention and the proper seat of control. Even when, for example, Suetonius comments that Claudius was wholly under the influence of his wives and freedmen, the emperor himself remains the grammatical subject of every act undertaken at their behest.[485] As a part of the biographer's intellectual or cultural milieu, Gill's 'structured self' allows us to speak of responsibility and accountability in the *Caesares* without being anachronistic and without needing to confront the problem of character as the location of an individual's

[483] Gill (2006) 207-290.
[484] Gill (2006) 415.
[485] *Claud*. 29. Note also that the rubric is isolated. Suetonius does not return to the theme or continually harp on the emperor's subservience.

every action. These concepts would have been new neither to Suetonius nor his audience.[486]

[486] They would not necessarily even have been unusual in the works of Suetonius' contemporaries. See, *e.g.*, Gill (1983) 486 on Tacitus: "After the opening thumbnail sketch of Tiberius (1.4), Tacitus shows no further interest in tracing back Tiberius' qualities to his childhood nature or in showing how his family traits came out in him. Tacitus' concern is rather to show that Tiberius' vices express a mature consciousness, and reflect deliberate choice." See also Woodman (1989) 197-205.

Bibliography

Adams, J.N. (1980). "Anatomical Terminology in Latin Epic," *BICS* 27: 50-62.

_____. (1982). "Anatomical Terms Used *Pars Pro Toto* in Latin," *PACA* 16: 37-45.

Adams, M. (1939). *C. Suetonius Tranquillus. Divi Augusti Vita. Edited with Introductions, Analysis of the Text, Notes, Appendices and Index* (London).

Armstrong, A.M. (1958). "The Methods of the Greek Physiognomists," *G&R* 2nd Ser. 5: 52-56.

Baldwin, B. (1983). *Suetonius* (Amsterdam).

Balsdon, J.P.V.D. (1934). *The Emperor Gaius (Caligula)* (Oxford).

Barton, T.S. (1994). *Power and Knowledge. Astrology, Physiognomics, and Medicine under the Roman Empire* (Ann Arbor).

Bloomer, W.M. (1992). *Valerius Maximus and the Rhetoric of the New Mobility* (Chapel Hill).

Bowersock, G.W. (1969). "Suetonius and Trajan," in *Hommages à Marcel Renard*. Collection Latomus 101 (Vol. 1): 119-125.

Bradley, K.R. (1973). "The Composition of Suetonius' *Caesares* Again," *JIES* 1: 257-263.

_____. (1978). *Suetonius' Life of Nero: An Historical Commentary*. Collection Latomus 157 (Brussels).

_____. (1991). "The Imperial Ideal in Suetonius' 'Caesares'," *ANRW* II.33.5: 3701-3732.

Braithwaite, A.W. (1927). *C. Suetoni Tranquilli Divus Vespasianus with an Introduction and Commentary* (London).

Brendel, O. (1979). *Prolegomena to the Study of Roman Art* (New Haven).

Butler, H.E., and Cary, M. (1927). *C. Suetoni Tranquilli Divus Iulius. Edited with an Introduction and Commentary* (London).

Canter, H.V. (1928). "Personal Appearance in the Biography of the Roman Emperors," *Studies in Philology* 25: 385-399.

Carter, J.M. (1982). *Suetonius. Divus Augustus. Edited with Introduction and Commentary* (London).

Couissin, J. (1953). "Suétone Physiognomoniste dans les *Vies des XII Césars*," *REL* 31 234-256.

De Coninck, L. (1983). *Suetonius en de Archivalia*. Verhandelingen van de Koninklijke Academie voor Wetenschappen, Letteren en Schone Kunsten van België (Brussels).

Dean-Jones, L. (2003). "Literacy and the Charlatan in Ancient Greek Medicine," in Yunis, H., ed., *Written Texts and the Rise of Literature Culture in Ancient Greece* (Cambridge and New York) 91-121.

Deutsch, M.E. (1917). "Concerning Caesar's Appearance," *CJ* 12: 247-253.

Dillon, S. (2006). *Ancient Greek Portrait Sculpture. Contexts, Subjects, and Styles* (Cambridge and New York).

Dorey, T.A., ed. (1967). *Latin Biography*. Studies in Latin Literature and its Influence (London).

Edwards, M.J., and Swain, S., eds. (1997). *Portraits. Biographical Representation in the Greek and Latin Literature of the Roman Empire* (Oxford and New York).

Ehrhardt, C., and Little, D. (1994). *Plutarch: Lives of Galba and Otho. A Companion* (Bristol).

Evans, E.C. (1935). "Roman Descriptions of Personal Appearance in History and Biography," *HSCP* 46: 43-84.

_____. (1941). "The Study of Physiognomy in the Second Century A.D.," *TAPA* 72: 96-108.

_____. (1945). "Galen the Physician as Physiognomist," *TAPA* 76: 287-298.

_____. (1950). "Physiognomics in the Roman Empire," *CJ* 45: 277-282.

_____. (1950). "A Stoic Aspect of Senecan Drama: Portraiture," *TAPA* 81: 169-184.

_____. (1969). *Physiognomics in the Ancient World. Trans. Amer. Philosoph. Soc. n.s.* 59 (Philadelphia).

Funaioli, G. (1947). "I Cesari di Suetonio," *Studi di letteratura antica* (Bologna).

Garuti, G. (1983). "Sulla docilitas ed extemporalitas di Tito (Suet. Tit. 3)," in *Atti del Congresso internazionale di Studi Flaviani* (Sept. 1981): 307-312.

Gascou, J. (1984). *Suétone Historien*. Bibl. des Écoles Franç. d'Athènes & de Rome 255 (Rome).

Geiger, J. (1985). *Cornelius Nepos and Ancient Political Biography*. Historia Einzelschrift 47 (Stuttgart).

Gill, C. (1983). "The Question of Character Development: Plutarch and Tacitus," *CQ NS* 33: 469-487.

_____. (1990). "The Character-Personality Distinction," in Pelling, C., ed., *Characterization and Individuality in Greek Literature* (Oxford and New York) 1-31.

_____. (1996). *Personality in Greek epic, tragedy, and philosophy: the self in dialogue* (Oxford and New York).

_____. (2006). *The Structured Self in Hellenistic and Roman Thought* (Oxford and New York).

Gleason, M.W. (1995). *Making Men. Sophists and Self-Presentation in Ancient Rome* (Princeton).

Gross, W.H. (1969). *Quas iconicas vocant: Zum Porträtcharakter der Statuen dreimaliger olympischer Sieger* (Göttingen).

Gugel, H. (1977). *Studien zur biographischen Technik Suetons*. Wiener Studien. Beiheft (Vienna).

Hands, A.R. (1974). "*Postremo Suo Tantum Ingenio Utebatur*," *CQ NS* 24: 312-317.

Hurley, D.W. (1993). *An Historiographical Commentary on Suetonius' Life of C. Caligula* (Atlanta).

_____. (2001). *Suetonius. Divus Claudius* (Cambridge and New York).

Ihm, M., ed. (1933). *C. Suetonius Tranquillus. Opera Vol. I* (Leipzig).

Janssen, J. (1919). *C. Suetonii Tranquilli Vita Domitiani* (Diss. Gronigen).

Jenkinson, E. (1967). "Nepos—An Introduction to Latin Biography," in Dorey, T.A., ed., *Latin Biography*. Studies in Latin Literature and its Influence (London) 1-15.

Jones, B.W. (1996). *Domitian*. (London).

_____. (2000). *Vespasian*. (London).

Jones, B.W., and Milns, R. (2002). *Suetonius, The Flavian emperors: a historical commentary* (London).

Kaster, R.A. (1995). *C. Suetonius Tranquillus. De Grammaticis et Rhetoribus. Edited with a Translation, Introduction, and Commentary* (Oxford and New York).

_____. (2005). *Emotion, Restraint, and Community in Ancient Rome*. Classical Culture and Society (Oxford and New York).

Kemezis, A.M. (2007). "Augustus the Ironic Paradigm: Cassius Dio's Portrayal of the *Lex Julia* and *Lex Papia Poppaea*," *Phoenix* 61: 270-285.

Kleiner, D.E.E. (1992). *Roman Sculpture* (New Haven).

Lamberton, R. (2001). *Plutarch* (New Haven).

Leo, F. (1901). *Die griechisch-römische Biographie nach ihrer literarischen Form* (Leipzig).

Levick, B. (1975). "Julians and Claudians," *G&R* 2nd Ser. 22: 29-38.

_____. (1978). "A Cry from the Heart from Tiberius Caesar?," *Historia* 27: 95-101.

Lewis, R.G. (1991). "Suetonius' 'Caesares' and their Literary Antecedents," *ANRW* II.33.5: 3621-3674.

Lloyd, G.E.R. (1983) *Science, Folklore and Ideology*. Studies in the Life Sciences in Ancient Greece (Oxford).

Lounsbury, R.C. (1979). *The Arts of Suetonius*. (Diss. Austin).

_____. (1987). *The Arts of Suetonius: An Introduction*. American Univers. Stud. Ser. 17, Class. Langagues & Lit. 3 (New York).

_____. (1991). "*Inter quos et Sporus erat*: The Making of Suetonius' 'Nero'," *ANRW* II.33.5: 3748-3779.

Marsh, F.B. (1931). *The Reign of Tiberius* (London).

Maurer, J.A. (1949). *A Commentary on C. Suetoni Tranquilli Vita C. Caligulae Caesaris, Chapters I-XXI* (Diss. Philadelphia).

Millar, F. (1988). "Cornelius Nepos, 'Atticus' and the Roman Revolution," *G&R* 2nd Ser. 35: 40-55.

Misener, G. (1923). "Loxus, Physician and Physiognomist," *CP* 18: 1-22.

_____. (1924). "Iconistic Portraits," *CP* 19: 97-123.

Mooney, G.W. (1930). *C. Suetoni Tranquilli De Vita Caesarum Libri VII-VIII. Galba. Otho. Vitellius. Divus Vespasianus. Divus Titus. Domitianus. With an Introduction,*

Translation, and Commentary (Dublin).

Morgan, G. (2000). "The *Publica Fames* of A.D. 68 (Suetonius, *Nero* 45.1)," *CQ* 50: 210-222.

_____. (2004). "Eight Notes on Suetonius' Galba," *Philologus* 148: 305-324.

_____. (2006). *69 A.D. The Year of the Four Emperors* (New York).

Mouchovà, B. (1968). *Studie zu Kaiserbiographien Suetons.* Acta Universitatis Carolinae, Philosophica et Historica (Prague).

Murison, C. (1992). *Suetonius: Galba, Otho, Vitellius* (London).

Pack, R.A. (1941). "Artemidorus and the Physiognomists," *TAPA* 72: 321-334.

Pelling, C. (1990). *Characterization and Individuality in Greek Literature* (Oxford and New York).

_____. (1990). "Childhood and Personality in Greek Biography," in Pelling, C., ed., *Characterization and Individuality in Greek Literature* (Oxford and New York) 213-244.

Perry, E. (2005). *The Aesthetics of Emulation in the Visual Arts of Ancient Rome* (New York).

Pike, J.B. (1903). *Gai Suetoni Tranquilli De Vita Caesarum Libri III-VI. Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, Nero. With Introduction and Notes* (Boston).

Rietra, J.R. (1928). *C. Suetoni Tranquilli Vita Tiberi—C.24-C.40. Neu Kommentiert* (Amsterdam).

Rolfe, J.C., trans. (1913). *Suetonius.* Loeb Classical Library. 2 Vols. (Cambridge).

Rosen, R.M. (2007). *Making mockery: the poetics of ancient satire* (Oxford and New York).

Sage, P. (1979a). "L'expression narrative dans les XII Césars de Suétone: analyse d'une structure de phrase," *Latomus* 19: 499-524.

_____. (1979b). "Quelques aspects de l'expression narrative les XII Césars de Suétone," *Revue Belge de Philologie et d'Histoire* 57: 18-50.

Sassi, M.M. (2001). *The science of man in ancient Greece.* Paul Tucker trans. (Chicago).

Skidmore, C. (1996). *Practical Ethics for Roman Gentlemen. The Work of Valerius Maximus* (Exeter).

Shotter, D. (1993). *Suetonius: Lives of Galba, Otho, and Vitellius* (Warminster).

Smith, R.R.R. (1996). "Typology and diversity in the portraits of Augustus," *JRA* 9: 31-47.

Steidle, W. (1951). *Sueton und die antike Biographie*. Zetemata 1 (Munich).

Stewart, A. (1993). *Faces of Power. Alexander's Image and Hellenstic Politics* (Berkeley).

Stok, F. (1995) "Ritratti Fisiognomici in Suetonio," in Gallo, I., Nicastri, L., eds., *Biografia e autobiografia degli antichi e dei moderni*. Publicazioni dell'Università degli Studi di Salerno (Naples) 109-135.

Stuart, D.R. (1928). *Epochs of Greek and Roman Biography*. Sather Classical Lectures (Berkeley).

Swain, S. (1989). "Character Change in Plutarch," *Phoenix* 43: 62-68.

_____. (1997). "Biography and Biographic in the Literature of the Roman Empire," in Edwards, M.J., Swain, S., eds., *Portraits. Biographical Representation in the Greek and Latin Literature of the Roman Empire* (Oxford and New York) 1-37.

Swain, S., ed. (2007). *Seeing the Face, Seeing the Soul. Polemon's Physiognomy from Classical Antiquity to Medieval Islam* (Oxford).

Swan, P.M. (2004). *The Augustan Succession: An Historical Commentary on Cassius Dio's Roman History Books 55-56 (9 BC-AD 14)* (Oxford and New York).

Syme, R. (1939). *The Roman Revolution* (Oxford).

Townend, G.B. (1967). "Suetonius and his Influence," in Dorey, T.A., ed., *Latin Biography*. Studies in Latin Literature and its Influence (London) 79-111.

Tsouna, V. (1998). "Doubts about Other Minds and the Science of Physiognomy," *CQ* 48: 1-12.

Tuplin, C. (2000). "Cornelius Nepos and the origins of political biography," in Deroux, C., ed., *Studies in Roman History and Latin Literature X*. Collection Latomus 254 (Brussels) 124-161.

Venini, P. (1977). *C. Suetonio Tranquillo, Vita di Galba, Otone, Vitellio* (Turin).

Vogt, S. (1999). *Aristoteles. Physiognomonica. Übersetzt und Kommentiert.* (Berlin).

Wallace-Hadrill, A. (1981). "The Emperor and his Virtues," *Historia* 10: 298-323.

_____. (1982). "Civilis Princeps: Between Citizen and King," *JRS* 72: 32-48.

_____. (2004 [1983]). *Suetonius* (2nd ed., London).

Wardle. D. (1994). *Suetonius' Life of Caligula: A Commentary*. Collection Latomus 225

(Brussels).

_____. (1998). *Valerius Maximus. Memorable Deeds and Sayings Book I* (Oxford and New York).

_____. (2007). "A Perfect Send-off: Suetonius and the Dying Art of Augustus (Suetonius, *Aug.* 99)," *Mnemosyne* 60: 443-463.

Wardman, A.E. (1967). "Description of Personal Appearance in Plutarch and Suetonius: The Use of Statues as Evidence," *CQ* 17: 414-420.

Warmington, B.H. (1977). *Suetonius. Nero. Text, with Introduction and notes* (Bristol).

Woodman, A.J. (1989). "Tacitus' Obituary of Tacitus," *CQ NS* 39: 197-205.

VITA

Raymond John Kim attended Thomas Jefferson High School, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He received the degree of Bachelor of Arts in Classics from Pomona College in Claremont, California in May, 1999. After spending the 1999-2000 academic year at The University of Pennsylvania's Post-Baccalaureate program in Classics, he entered the Gradudate School at The University of Texas at Austin in August, 2000.

Permanent Address: 107 Redcliffe Dr., Clairton, PA 15025

This dissertation was typed by the author.